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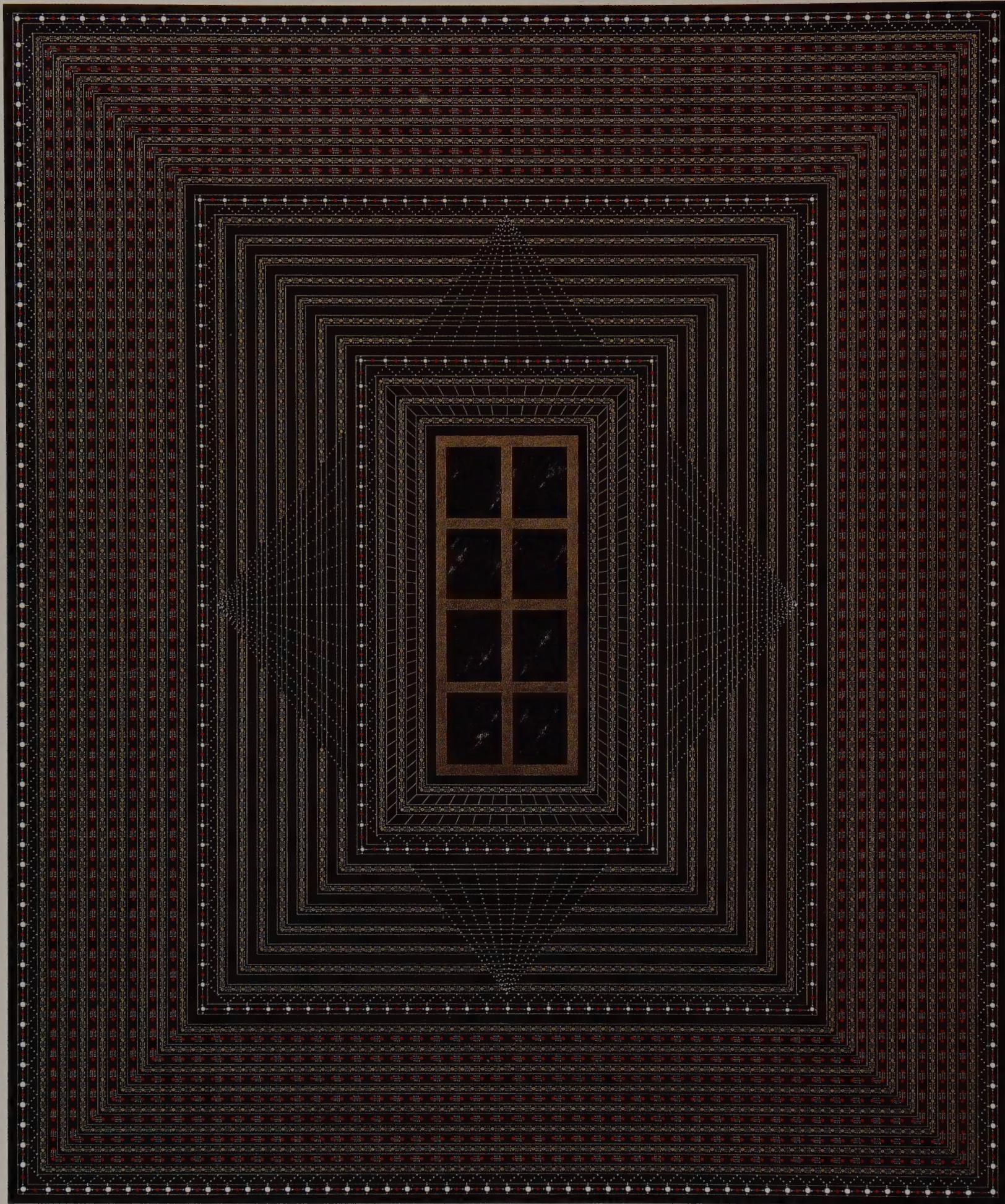
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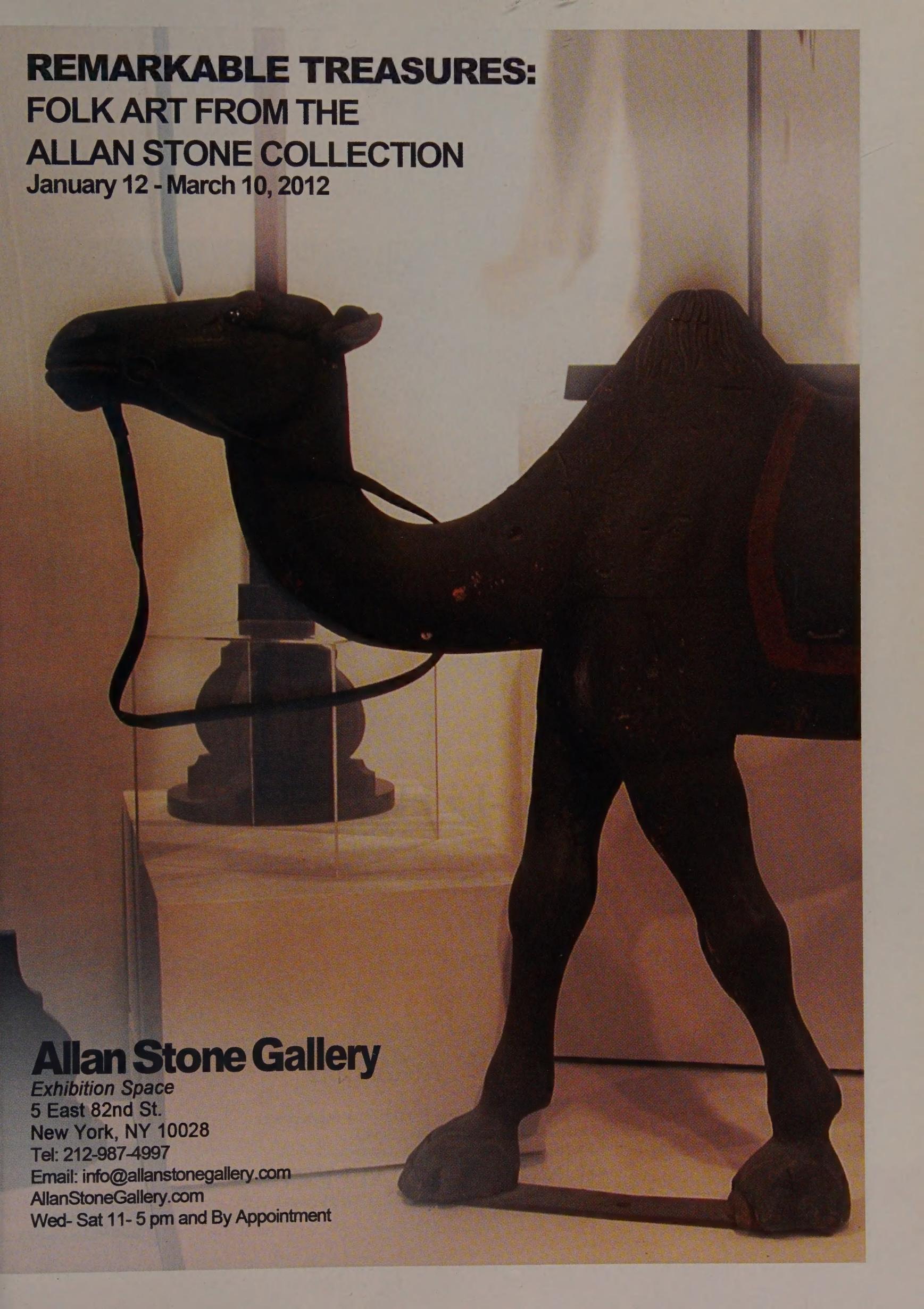
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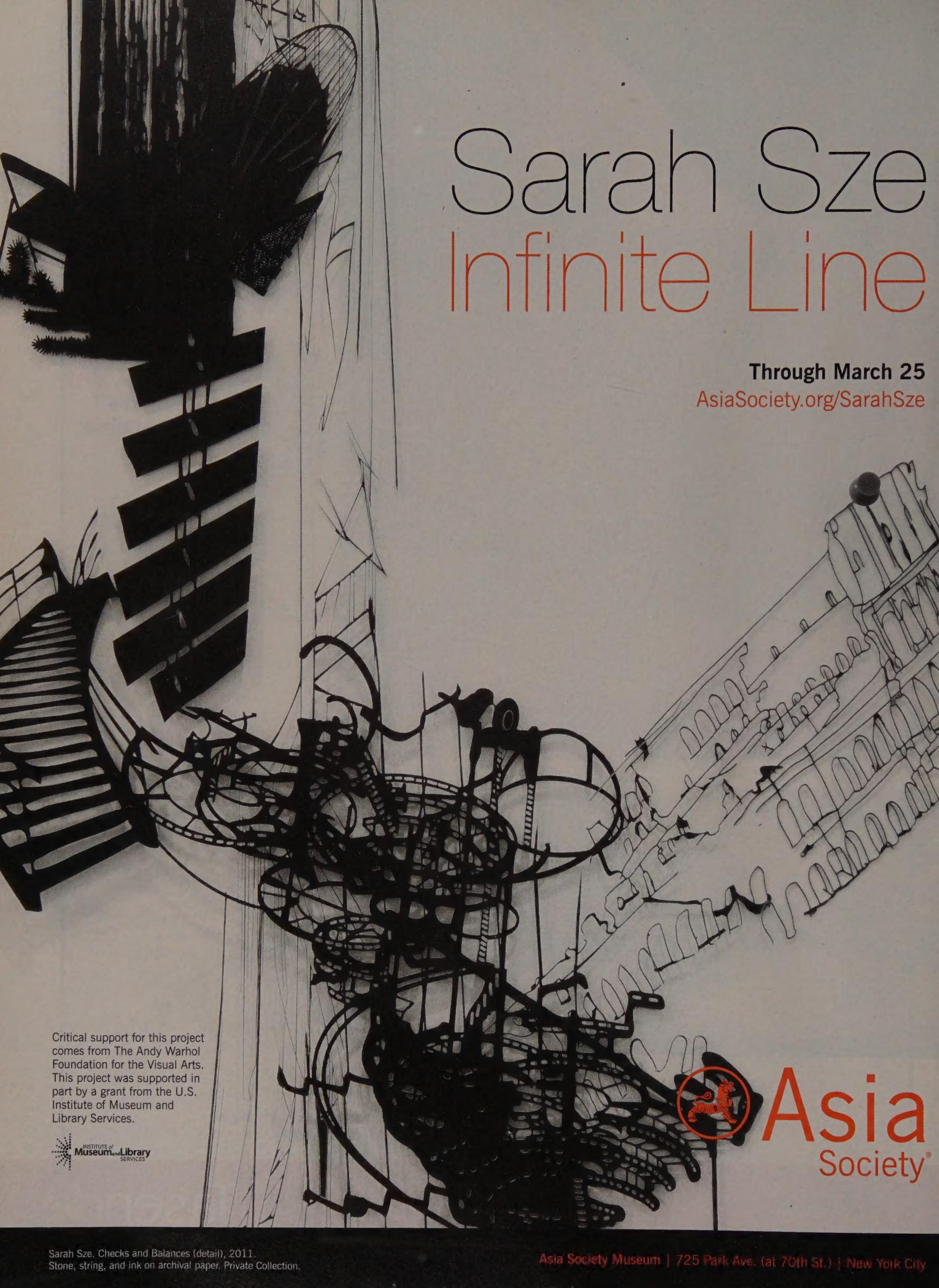
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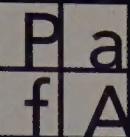
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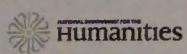
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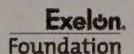


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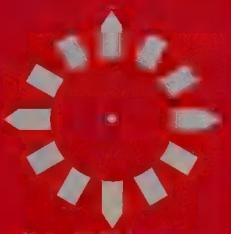
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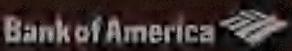
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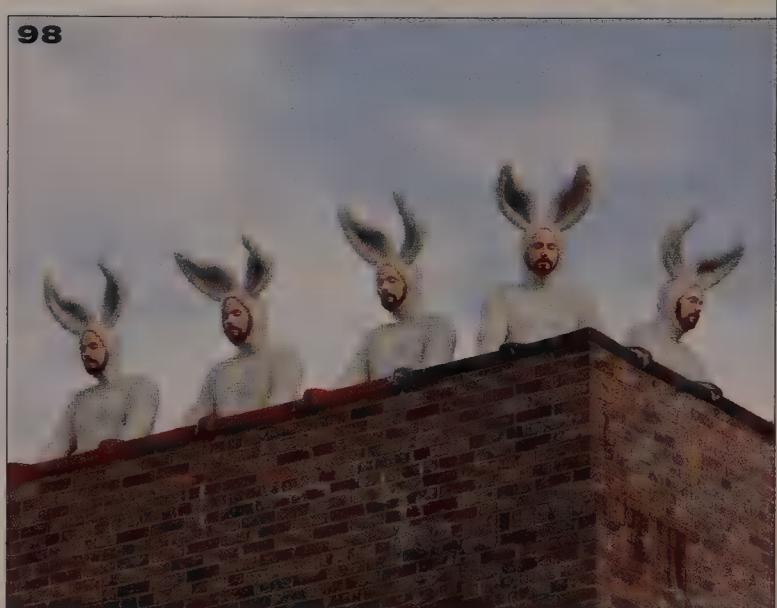
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Instant Mural (Detail), 1974. Also: Performance documented in the film *Instant: The Getty and Pace* (1973). Courtesy of the Getty Center. © The J. Paul Getty Trust.

January 2012

# Contents

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## Features

### 76 American Art, Alice Walton's Way

The Walmart heiress's controversial museum opens with an inclusive and even quirky selection of American art that reveals an increasing focus on the present

*Patricia Failing*

### 84 Seeing Still for the First Time

The new museum dedicated to Clyfford Still in Denver presents an unprecedented sweep of his work—even as its staff continues to make more discoveries

*Patricia Failing*

### 92 Man of Refraction

Using light, mirrors, and neon and with a sensibility at once political and poetic, Iván Navarro creates glowing gateways of endless space

*Hilarie M. Sheets*

### 98 The Artist as Philanthropist

At a time when government and corporate support is decreasing, artists' foundations are becoming increasingly influential

*Eileen Kinsella*

## Departments

## 23 Art Talk

Mark Wallinger, Martin Herbert, Grayson Perry, Ben Ruse, Sara Ramo, Neville Wakefield, Barbara Kruger, Peter Woytuk, Karen Meyerhoff, Ed Ruscha, Warren Neidich, Elena Bajo, Gracie Devito, Maira Kalman, Daniel Handler, Marylyn Dintenfass, Aliza Edelman, Kevin Williams, Sharon McAllister, Jenny Saville, Cheryl Brutvan

## 40 News

**LONDON** When is a reward not a reward? **SPOTLIGHT** Max Hollein: When "no" means "maybe" **ABU DHABI** Scenes from a mirage? **DENVER** A river runs through it **NEW YORK** Murder, they wrote: Who killed van Gogh?; Mission accomplished: Showcasing American art at the United Nations **IN MEMORIAM** Mary Hunt Kahlenberg

## 56 Books

*Van Gogh: The Life* By Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith • *With Child* By Howard Schatz; Foreword by Vicki Goldberg • *A Bigger Message: Conversations with David Hockney* By Martin Gayford • *Jac Leirner in Conversation with Adele Nelson* By Adele Nelson; Essay by Robert Storr • *The Landmarks of New York, 5th Edition* By Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel

## 72 Looking at Art

Command Performance: William Nicholson's group portrait of Canadian generals during World War I is an unusual and haunting war tableau

William Feaver

## 120 Critic's Pick

Jane Benson: String Theory

Barbara A. MacAdam

**COVER** Clyfford Still, PH-67 (detail), 1944, oil on canvas, 50" x 32". ©Clyfford Still Estate/Collection Clyfford Still Museum, Denver. See story, page 84

## 105 Reviews

## NEW YORK

Maurizio Cattelan  
Henri Matisse  
Lee Bontecou



Walton Ford  
Charles Simonds  
Rashaad Newsome  
Pepón Osorio  
Adam Straus  
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George Wesley Bellows (1882–1925) *The Rich Water*, 1913, oil on panel, 14 3/4 x 19 1/8 inches

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*The Dream*, 1962, Oil on canvas, 81 x 91 inches, signed and inscribed lower right

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## Stalled at the Gate

Sitting in his London studio among remnants of past projects—angling globes, a plinth, a crib—British artist Mark Wallinger chuckles ruefully when he says, “There’s a glorious history of unbuilt things, isn’t there?” The topic arises because his most grandiose project to date, a commission to erect a 170-foot-high white horse sculpture in Kent County, southeastern England, is on hold as efforts to raise the £12 million cost flag.

“It was ‘hooray,’ and then the credit crunch happened,” Wallinger says. Asked if he’s optimistic about whether *The White Horse* will reach the finishing post, he hesitates: “I’m a half-full, half-empty glass—it varies, I would hope it would, but I’m prepared for disappointment.”

Although he’s an accomplished painter, Wallinger prefers to work in mediums that invite viewer interaction, and his sometimes-outlandish art reflects political, religious, and historical preoccupations, often playing on double meanings. For *Slooper* (2004), he spent ten nights in a bear suit prowling around Berlin’s Neue Nationalgalerie, and in 2007 he won the Turner Prize for *State Britain*, a re-creation of an antiwar campaigner’s 141-foot-long protest camp outside London’s Houses of Parliament.

However, cost and practicality have thwarted Wallinger before. A new monograph, written by Marlin Herber and published by Thames & Hudson, lists 15 unrealized projects, including a colossal and lurid balloon of a human heart that was to hover over the Kent town of Folkestone to commemorate the 17th-century physician William Harvey, a life-size biblical ark to perch atop a mountain in northern Britain, and a proposal to the Aspen Art Museum to scatter \$22,000 coins (worth \$15,000) into Colorado’s Roaring Fork River, in reference to Aspen’s wealth and mining history. “I wanted to see at what point people would get their feet wet,” he says of the latter concept.

Wallinger particularly regrets the rejection of his proposal for ten giant white spheres to map the gateways to London’s 2012 Olympics but says *The White Horse* “will probably top

the list” of disappointments if it gets shelved. Making outdoor works in Britain is notoriously challenging. “I think it’s so compromised, doing public sculpture. It’s all that health and safety and not offending anybody,” notes fellow Turner Prize winner, Grayson Perry. “It’s a nightmare to make it.”

*Horse* was the favorite of five short-listed designs in the 2007 competition for a monumental artwork in Ebbsfleet, Kent. Aside from symbolizing Britain’s long tradition of horse racing and fox hunting, equine images are etched in the public imagination, from centuries-old hillside chalk carvings of horse figures to George Stubbs’s paintings of noble mares and stallions.

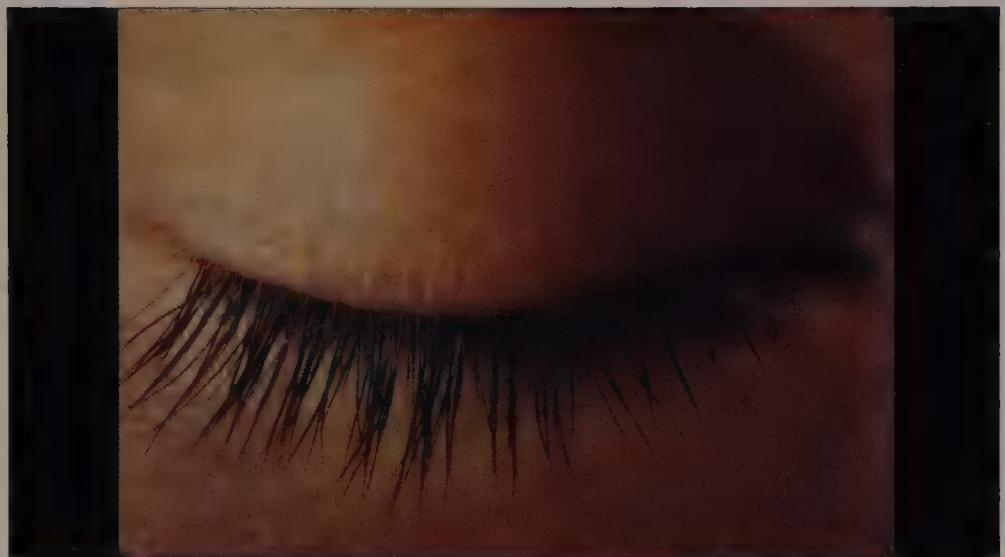
Wallinger, a former racing aficionado who once bought a



**Model of Mark Wallinger’s towering public sculpture *The White Horse*, proposed for Ebbsfleet, England. Anthony Reynolds Gallery in London is selling the model in an edition of 30 to help fund the faltering project.**

racehorse and called it A Real Work of Art, has produced an edition of 30 models of the white thoroughbred to raise money to “reenergize” the project. Ben Ruse, a director of the project, won’t reveal how much has been raised so far, but despite the economic climate he estimates that construction should begin by mid-2013. “*Horse* is a high-profile, worthwhile, worthy project,” says Ruse. “There’s nothing to say it can’t gallop forward confidently.”

—Elizabeth Fullerton



## Ad Venture

In **Sara Ramo**'s 90-second video *Welcome to Venice* (2011), a man walks through stark white corridors, dragging dozens of bags adorned with logos for Chanel, Gucci, and Versace, while the sound of slowly dripping water echoes all around him. Venice is in a constant battle against the Adriatic Sea, but lately the city has also been sinking under gigantic fashion advertisements draped across its historical buildings.

"It's a city that essentially has a contentious relationship to advertising," says curator **Neville Wakefield**, whose film *Commercial Break* features Ramo's video and clips from 134 other artists who explore the twisted ties between art and advertising. Wakefield's project debuted in Venice during the recent biennale, although it was not part of the official ceremonies. "I've never been in anything 'officially,'" he says.

Screenings followed at the Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow and the New York chapter of the Nuit Blanche nighttime art festival, and the entire project is online at [CommercialBreak.org](http://CommercialBreak.org). Wakefield pulled together *Commercial Break* in three months. Each video is 90 seconds or less, and even though there are some recent classics from the likes of **Barbara Kruger**, many artists created or reworked videos specifically for the project. Online, the order of presentation is random, so each visit to the website creates a different experience.

**Erika Verzutti**'s oddly sexy video of mannequin buttocks might follow **Adel Abdessemed**'s shot of a bare foot stomping on a Coke can, and what comes next might be **Lindsay Lohan** in an infinity pool, courtesy of **Richard Phillips**, or a model slowly getting undressed for **Vanessa Beecroft**. Sooner or later a bed is going to appear, but it's left to chance whether it will be the one topped by **Ryan Gander**'s bouncing woman or **Johan Grimonprez**'s standing deer. "The narrative juxtaposition never remains the same," says Wakefield. "That was an important element of how the film should be seen." Whatever comes up, it will be an abbreviated work of art—and a commercial. —*Keith Plocek*

**Stills from Neville Wakefield's film *Commercial Break*, 2011, which compiles over a hundred brief art videos, including Sara Ramo's *Welcome to Venice*, 2011, Barbara Kruger's *In Violence*, 2009, and Adel Abdessemed's *Foot on*, 2005 (top to bottom).**



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## Creature Feature

Most of the animals that recently meandered their way down New York's Broadway under darkness of night arrived at their destinations—except for the hens. The colorful bronze chickens were rattled by the ride and needed to go home for repairs. But sculptor **Peter Woytuk**, the animals' progenitor, wasn't worried. "They didn't entirely fall out of the truck," he said soon after the accident, "but were a little banged up."

While the hens convalesced in his Connecticut studio, Woytuk checked in on his other sculptural creatures: ravens, ostriches, bantams, elephants, bulls, sheep, a kiwi, a bear cat. These now dot Broadway from 59th to 168th Streets, as part of a collaboration between the Broadway Mall Association, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Morrison Gallery of Kent, Connecticut (Woytuk's main gallery). Woytuk is the sixth artist invited to display artworks along the historic thoroughfare. His animal, fruit, and tool sculptures will be up through April and represent 30 years of work. "I like distilling forms," he said, "and the animals are just a conduit for that."

His first stop was Columbus Circle, where two of his

giant elephants held court. A crowd of tourists posed with the pachyderms, taking pic-

tures. Woytuk approached the beasts for closer inspection and was pleased with

the way the public's interaction was affecting his sculptures. One of the elephant's trunks holds a bronze red apple. "The red has come off in a certain spot but now there's a beautiful color underneath it," he said. "It's evolving." Apples, which Woytuk has been depicting for years to "suggest balance, motion, and form," appear throughout the Broadway menagerie and are coincidentally an apt motif for the Big Apple.

The artist himself has never lived in New York. He was born in 1958 in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and raised by his architect father and textile-artist mother in Massachusetts. After majoring in photography at Ohio's Kenyon College, he apprenticed for **Philip Grausman** in the early '80s and decided to become a sculptor in his own right. In addition to running his studio in Connecticut, Woytuk works with foundries in China and in Thailand, where he also has a home.

Despite the hefty size of the bronze sculptures (the elephants weigh between 6,000 and 9,000 pounds), and apart from the hens, the placement of the art on Broadway went smoothly, Woytuk said. "We did it all in one night."

—Nana Asfour



**Peter Woytuk's Watering Can**, on Broadway at 96th Street in New York.

The artist working on **Bear Cat** in Thailand.

**Elephant with Apple**, on Columbus Circle (clockwise from top left).



# Shawn Dulaney *Sojourn*

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## Pigments of Their Imaginations

Last spring, some staffers at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York spent their Thursday mornings and evenings taking a very slow tour of the exhibition then on view, "The Great Upheaval: Modern Art from the Guggenheim Collection, 1910–1918." They were hunting for hues—

"We started at the top of the ramp and worked our way down," says **Karen Meyerhoff**, managing director for business development at the Guggenheim, who led the initiative. "Very quickly, we learned that there was a very rich palette that could be derived from this early-20th-century set of artists." The result is 150 Classical Colors that range from the scarlet of *Red Eiffel Tower* (1911–12) by **Robert Delaunay** to sooth-

ing blue-greens borrowed for us over time," says Meyerhoff. "They're ideally suited to presenting art." The 50 tones include whites, taupes, and grays favored by Guggenheim curators and exhibition designers as well as hues preferred by **Frank Lloyd Wright**, whose early sketches for the museum imagined it red. (Cherokee, his earthy favorite, was immediately nixed by Solomon Guggenheim's art adviser, **Hilla Rebay**, but makes the cut here.)

For those more interested in showcasing art than sampling it, the paint line also includes a palette called Gallery Colors that is heavy on creamy neutrals and darker shades. "These are tried and true colors that have worked



from the land and sky of **Vincent van Gogh**'s 1889 *Mountains at Saint-Rémy*.

Meyerhoff and her team plan to mine the museum's upcoming summer exhibition, "International Abstraction and the Guggenheim, 1949–1960," for a new series of paints. "We're eager to look at these paintings from the middle of

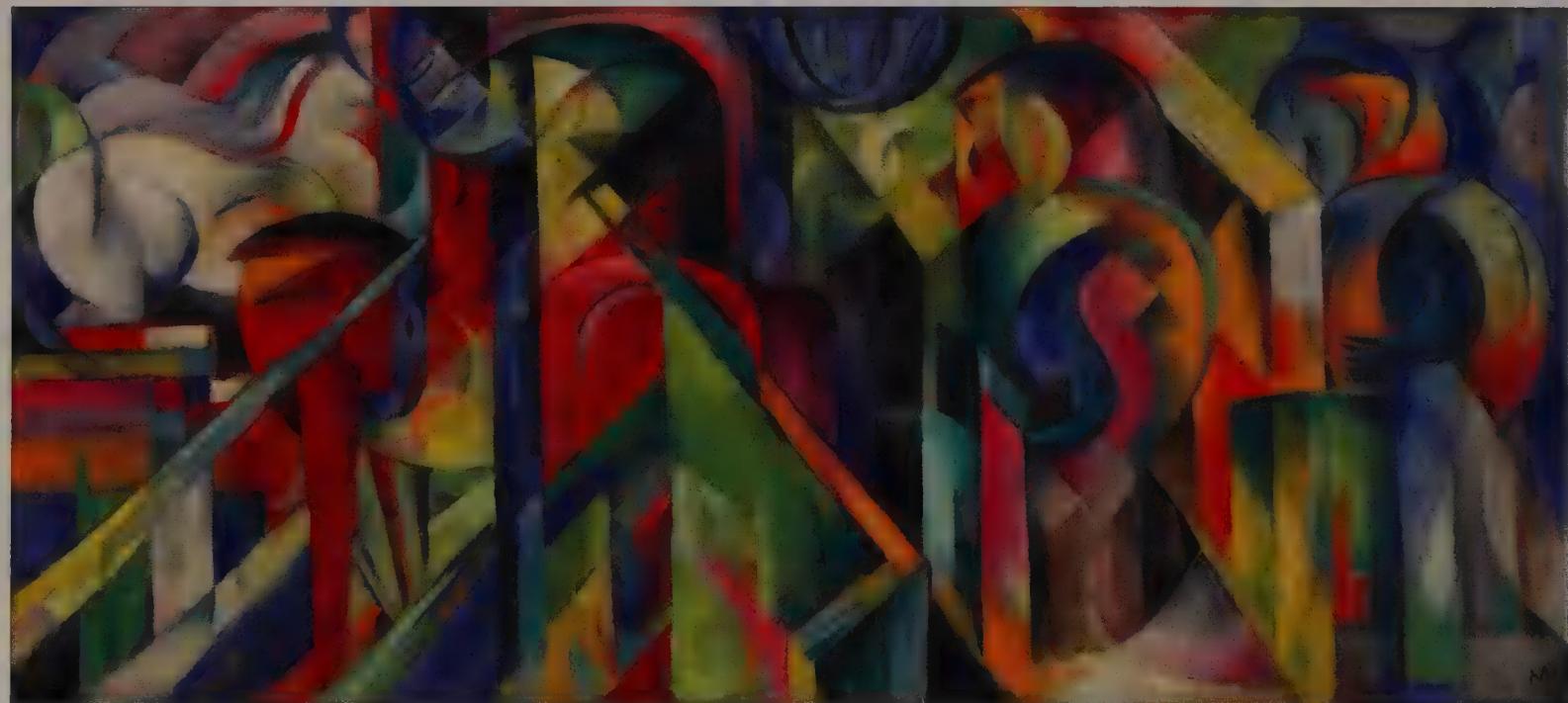
the 20th century," she says. "When you start moving into more synthetic pigments, what happens in terms of color? We're going to get something quite different."

In the meantime, the 200 Guggenheim Color hues now available offer plenty of choices, particularly for the chromatically adventurous. "For the people who want to have the red bedroom, there's that option, but there are also strong colors for those who want to use color in a subtle way," says Meyerhoff. "You could paint the inside of a door or the inside of a drawer in a color from a **Kandinsky** and have this surprising, wonderful, rich thing happen."

—Stephanie Murg



the sulfur yellow of **Franz Marc**'s *Stables* (1913), a peachy-rose plucked from the 1913 *Flower Bed* of **Paul Klee**, the dull chocolate of a **Georges Braque** violin—that would be replicated in Guggenheim Color, a new line of wall paints produced in collaboration with Vermont-based Fine Paints of Europe.



# MARIAN BINGHAM

## HORSE POWER: RECENT PAINTINGS



LAURAGAIS II, OIL AND MULTI-MEDIA ON LINEN, 29" X 36.25", 2011

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For *Flashback*, 2011, Pierre Bismuth parked a car in front of LA>ART gallery in Los Angeles and played news audio of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential win.

## Lots to See

When **Ed Ruscha** was taking photos of gas stations and parking lots in the 1960s, California car culture was considered emblematic of American individualism. "Now when you go to a parking space in L.A., you can put your credit card in, so it already puts you into a grid," says artist **Warren Neidich**. "You can actually go online and see where parking spaces are available. It's part of the information grid. The parking space has changed."

But Los Angeles parking spots have been seeing a lot more revelry of late, thanks to a yearlong project put together by Neidich and **Elena Bajo**. "Art in the Parking Space," presented by LA>ART, features temporary works by more than 40 international artists, all bound together by the relentless grid of the city's white and yellow stripes.

Last July, **Gracie Devito** climbed atop her black Toyota Highlander in Chinatown and

played a harmonium to set the mood for a series of performances by other artists. "I got to thinking of my car as a music box—doors popping

event, which will bring pieces by several artists to the garage, is part of the Pacific Standard Time Performance and Public Art Festival.

open, windshield wipers moving—and developing acts around that," she says.

On January 24, Devito will park her Highlander in the Standard Hotel's parking garage in West Hollywood and again lead a group of performers, this time with a focus on cars as holders of memory. "The car has all these indexes on it from the past," she says. Streaks of color still stain her SUV from painted balloons that burst during the first performance. The Standard Hotel

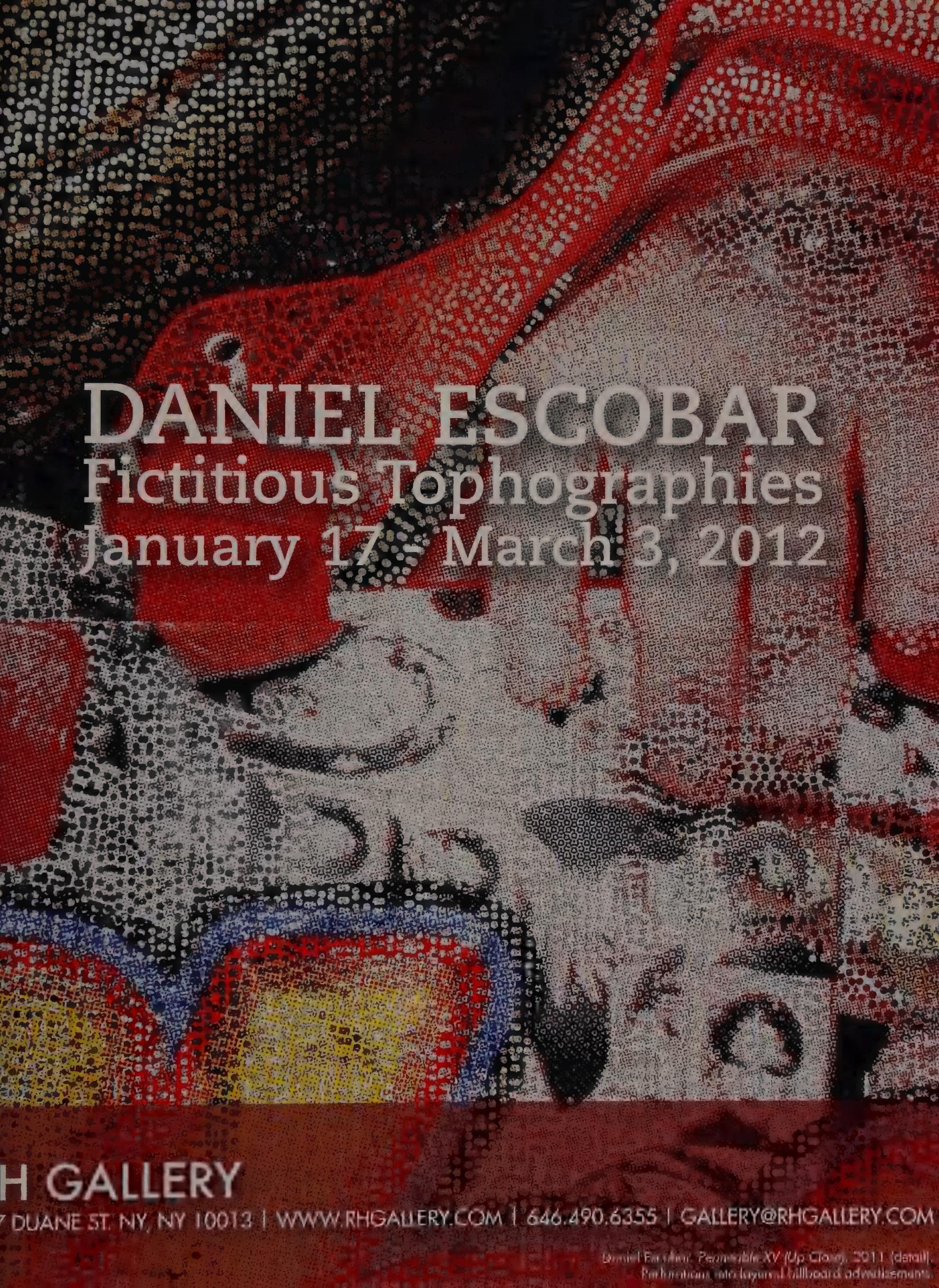
Other "Art in the Parking Space" works have included choreographer **Anita Pace** leading onlookers in an asphalt dance party in *Dance Here, Here Dance*; Belgian artist **Pierre Bismuth** blasting news announcements of **Barack Obama**'s 2008 presidential victory from a parked rental car, in *Flashback*, which evoked the fleeting optimism that swept the nation on that day; and **David Medalla** and **Jevijoe Vitug** giving away what were purported to be celebrity underpants, such as **Paul Newman**'s, in *Roulette Wheel in Homage to Marcel Duchamp*. The series continues through June, with artworks occurring sporadically.

"All the interventions in the project embrace the idea of ephemerality," says Bajo. "Any of us who drives a car knows that when you park your car you are occupying the space for only a short time."

—Keith Plocek



Anita Pace in her performance *Dance Here, Here Dance*, 2011.



# DANIEL ESCOBAR

## Fictitious Topographies

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Daniel Escobar, *Permeable XV (Up Close)*, 2011 (detail).  
Photomosaic, 160' x 100' billboard advertisement.

## The Breakup Artist

"The only thing that made me sad was remembering how much I loved Michael Goldenthal in high school and how much he didn't love me," **Maira Kalman** says impishly

over the course of Min's tumultuous relationship with Ed Slaterton, cocaptain of the Hellman High School Beavers basketball team and cad extraordinaire.

*Why We Broke Up* begins with a thunk, as Min deposits her box of mementos on Ed's doorstep. What follows is an epic letter from Min to Ed that she left with the box, a letter in which she revisits episodes from the dawn of their love affair through its demise, and the role the fateful objects played in their erstwhile romance.

Kalman, who regularly contributes cartoons to the *New Yorker* and was recently the subject of a traveling museum

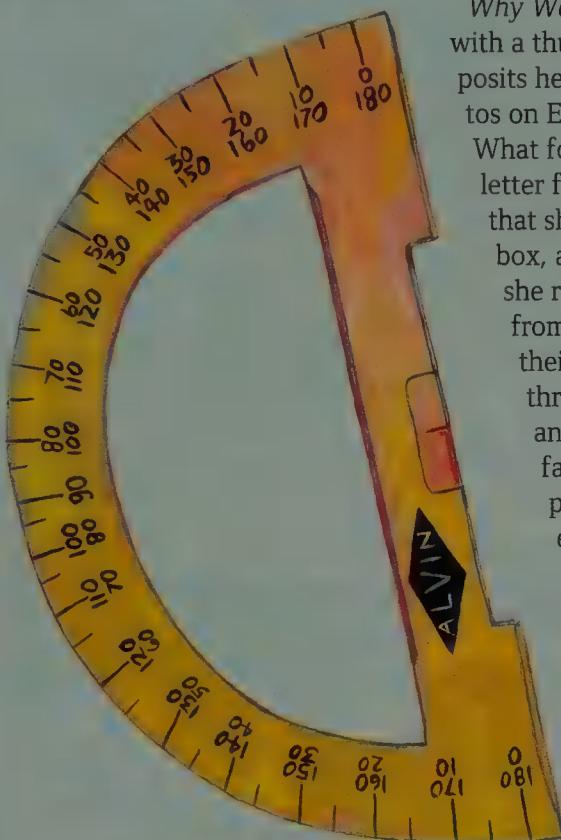
survey organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, first partnered with Handler on the picture book *13 Words*, which came out in 2010. That story is attributed to Handler's alter ego, Lemony Snicket, who, in Handler's words "would

never be at something like a high-school basketball game and would be more likely in a parasol-factory fire." While Handler wrote the story for *13 Words* before enlisting

Kalman as its illustrator, for their latest book, Handler began by asking Kalman what she wanted to depict.

"It was a real roll of the dice, because she likes to paint everything," the author explains. "I had no idea what she was going to give me. I thought she would say, 'Freud!' or 'these boots!' or something." When Kalman decided she would rather stick to rubber bands and ticket stubs and other odds and ends, however, Handler sought to produce "a story in which ordinary things would become beautiful and wondrous," as they do in Kalman's paintings.

Beyond their ability to find the extraordinary in the ordinary, Kalman and Handler share another trait, one that is particularly fitting for this collaboration. They've both



### I'm a Fool is what

as she describes illustrating *Why We Broke Up*, **Daniel Handler**'s new novel about adolescent ardor and angst.

For the book, published by Little, Brown, Kalman painted pictures of curios that include bottle caps, a box of matches, a stained dish towel, a protractor, a condom wrapper, an egg cuber, and a jar of chestnuts. In fact, she depicted every item hoarded by Handler's brokenhearted protagonist, an obscure-movie fanatic named Min Green,



saved their old love letters. "They are fantastically passionate, and I put them in a nice group in a box," Kalman says of the romantic epistles she recently dug up. "I am imagining my children will read them one day—but maybe that's not a good idea."

As for Handler, he fondly remembers one of the many amorous missives he has saved, written by a girlfriend on all of the airsickness bags she could nab on a plane. "It was," he recalls, "something like 20-barf-bags long."

—Emma Allen



Maira Kalman's illustrations of knickknacks for the novel *Why We Broke Up*, by Daniel Handler.

# MANOLO VALDÉS

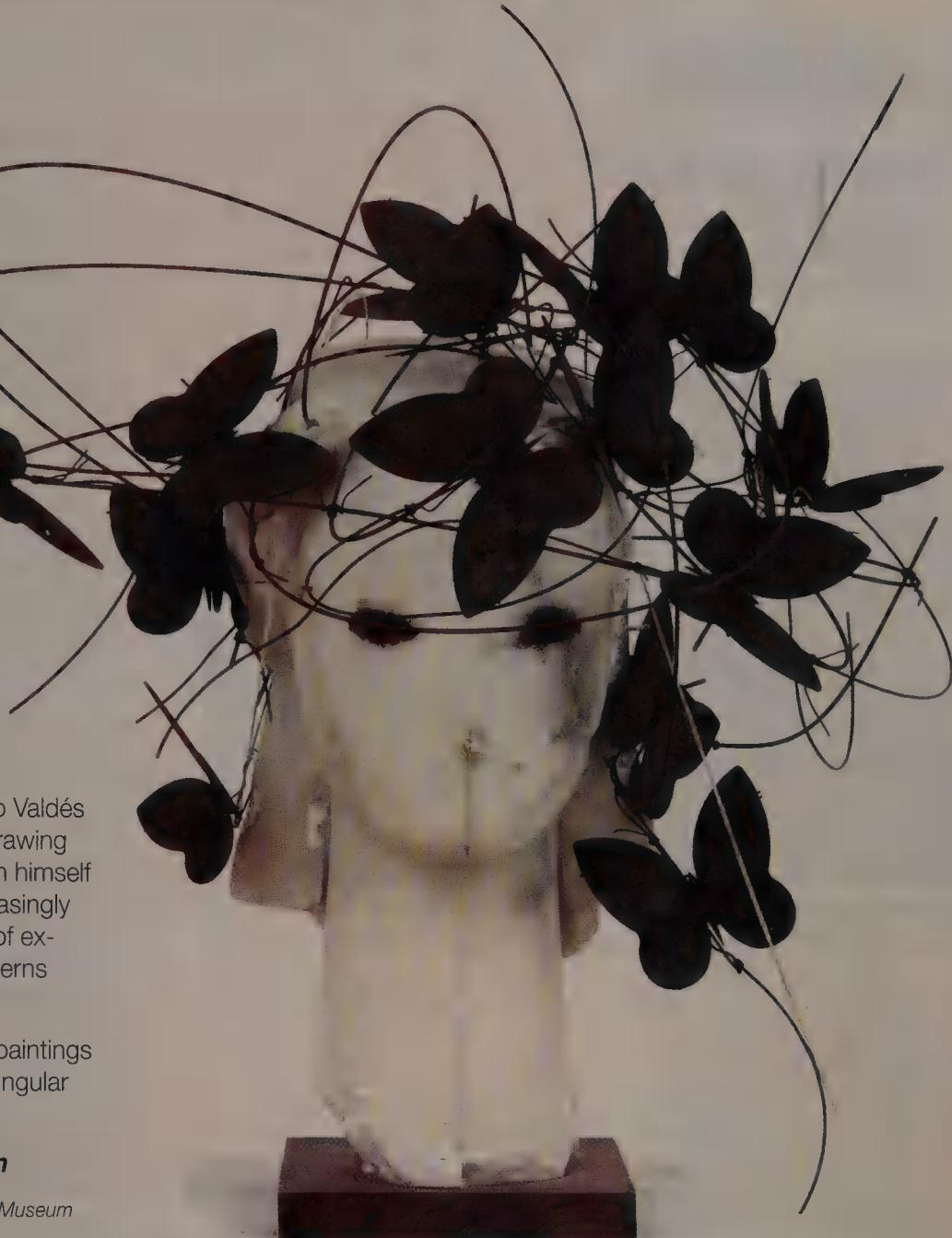
Through March 25

Internationally renowned Spanish master Manolo Valdés is a pioneer in the fields of painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking. In each medium, he has shown himself to be technically skilled, highly original and unceasingly provocative. Valdés introduced to Spain a form of expression that combined political and social concerns with humor and irony.

This stunning retrospective features a variety of paintings and sculpture that demonstrate the range and singular talent of this great artist.

**Generously underwritten by Bruce Sherman**

*This exhibition is organized by the Patty & Jay Baker Naples Museum of Art and Marlborough Gallery, New York*



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Above: Manolo Valdés, *Head II*, 2011, alabaster and iron, 24 x 30 x 24 inches. © Manolo Valdés.  
Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery, New York

Left: Leah Wingfield, *Chance Meeting = Love*, 2010, Cast glass, 17 x 17.5 x 4 inches.  
Courtesy of Habatat Galleries, Michigan

## Wheel Estate

**Marylyn Dintenfass**'s *Parallel Park*—30,000 square feet of fabric imprinted with rich colors, soft swirls, and lopsided tire



**Marylyn Dintenfass** with *Parallel Park*, her public-art commission for the Lee County Justice Center's parking garage in Fort Myers, Florida.

shapes celebrating her love of muscle cars—has raised a parking garage in Fort Myers, Florida, to art status.

Some people have even mistaken the Lee County Justice Center's five-tier garage for an art museum and have tried to enter. But only employees with swipe cards are admitted. Fort Myers doesn't have an art museum, though it boasts a lively art scene and is proud to be the locale of **Thomas Edison** and **Henry Ford**'s winter homes, which are now historic sites.

In *Marylyn Dintenfass Parallel Park*, a new monograph written by **Aliza Edelman** and published by Hard Press Editions, architect **Kevin Williams** explains the reason for the art: a building code requires cars to be screened from the public. "He could have just put up trellises and planted bougainvillea," says **Sharon McAllister**, chair of Fort Myers's Public Art Committee, "but he didn't."

Dintenfass chose fabric panels made of Kevlar, a synthetic, hurricane-resistant material that is five times stronger than steel

by weight. They have been printed with archival inks and treated with ultraviolet protection and are fastened with ties

and grommets to Williams's aluminum grids mounted over the garage's open bays. Twenty-three outward-projecting panels, each one 33 feet tall by 23 feet wide, march around the garage's four sides. Their blues, greens, yellows, and reds change intensity in available light from morning into night.

It's the first joint venture of Lee County and the Public Art Committee and the latest public commission for the Brooklyn-born artist, who has created installations for the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York and Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, Israel, among other projects. Recently, she showed a series of oil paintings, in an exhibition called "Souped Up / Tricked Out" at New York's Babcock Galleries, that further expresses her affection for car culture.

An identifying plaque on the garage gives the work's title and the artist's description of her concept—which may prevent people from thinking they're looking at a museum.

—Donald Miller

## RAW POWER

For **Jenny Saville**, flesh "is all things. Ugly, beautiful, repulsive, compelling, anxious, neurotic, dead, alive"—in a word, raw. So it's fitting that a selection of her paintings and drawings of unidealized bodies inaugurates Recognition of Art by Women, or RAW, a series of special exhibitions at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, Florida.

"The concept here is to recognize women artists who haven't really received their due," says **Cheryl Brutvan**, the museum's curator of contemporary art, who will organize annual RAW shows through 2016, with the help of a \$1.5 million grant from the Leonard and Sophie Davis Fund/MLDauray Arts Initiative. "I thought immediately of Jenny Saville, because there haven't been many opportunities to really engage with her work."

On view through March 4 at the Norton, Saville's first museum survey in the United States includes more than two dozen works, ranging from the fleshy-figured 1992 canvases that first caught the eye of collector **Charles Saatchi** to

the latest large-scale drawings inspired by Renaissance nativity portraits. "It was critical to represent the evolution of her work, right up to the most recent drawings that refer to

**Leonardo**

and **Michelangelo**," says Brutvan, who visited Saville in her Oxford, England, studio to preview the pieces.

Artist and curator later met up in New York to tour the Museum of Modern Art's retrospective of **Willem de Kooning**, who Saville has referred to as her "main man," owing to his dazzling facility with paint.

Brutvan is now planning the next RAW exhibition, though she won't divulge the names of artists under consideration for the remainder of the series. "I would like to think of it internationally and across generations," she says. "There are so many great artists who happen to be women."

—Stephanie Murg



**Time II**, 2010, ■ charcoal drawing by Jenny Saville.

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### 100 Years Ago

After several years of conflict in the Salmagundi Club over the question of admitting women at stated times to the clubhouse, it has finally been decided to admit on the second Tuesday evening of each month, the wives and fair friends of members.

On Tuesday last the first "ladies' night" programme was given and a concert, which was largely attended and evidently much appreciated, was given. Mr. W. W. Mallory sang, Mr. W. Colson played the 'cello and Mrs. Catherine Blum also sang.

— "Art Club Yields to Women," January 27, 1912

### 75 Years Ago

So able and progressive a sculptor as Ossip Zadkine is not only bound to attract wide attention in his first complete American showing, which is now being held at the Brummer Gallery, but he is also likely to strip bare the emaciated and misshapen standards of criticism for modern sculpture. Such criticism has consisted largely of the application of labels to men who easily fall into regular categories of Rodin followers, of mortuary classicists, of Gothicists by affectation and so on through the devious banalities to which the greater part of modern sculpture is subjected.

— "The Sculpture of Ossip Zadkine,"

by Alfred M. Frankfurter, January 30, 1937

### 50 Years Ago

No large review of American art can avoid trouble. The recent Thirtieth Anniversary Exhibition at the Whitney was an interesting review of its possessions selected from the point of view of today. The visitor who then decided to visit the Museum of Modern Art next door, was greeted by Matisse's glorious cut-outs. He had passed from American night to European day. It was the young nation which now seemed weary and filled with foreboding.

— "New Blood in the Old Cross-Section,"  
by Lawrence Campbell, January 1962

### 25 Years Ago

"I don't really like the work you have in this show," sniffs a museum curator in a gallery. . . . The gallery director retorts: "But Charles Saatchi likes it!"

So there. It doesn't matter if you like it or not. It's been certified by Charles Saatchi.

Charles Saatchi. The name of the global advertising tycoon who is said to spend more than \$2 million annually in the art market is heard everywhere. Many say he is the most powerful collector in contemporary art—in the words of one dealer, a 20th-century Medici—one whose influence as a tastemaker exceeds that of any critic or curator.

— "The Saatchi Factor,"  
by Richard W. Walker, January 1987



Romare Bearden, *Up at Minton's*, 1980, collage with painted elements, 39.5 x 29.6 inches

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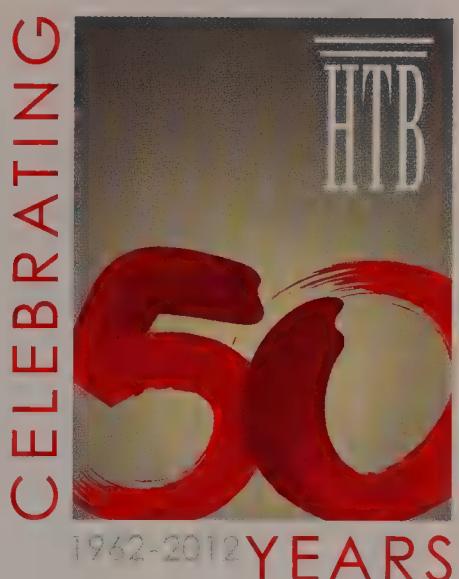
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Herb Ritts, *Richard Gere-Poolside*, 1982, C-type print, Courtesy of the Herb Ritts Foundation, Los Angeles © Herb Ritts Foundation



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**O**n the night of July 28, 1994, after the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt had closed for the night, a security guard was grabbed by a masked man. A second man handcuffed him and bound his eyes with tape. The thugs pushed him into a closet and warned him to keep quiet.

They took two paintings by J. M. W. Turner, *Shade and Darkness—the Evening of the Deluge* and *Light and Color*, and a painting by Caspar David Friedrich. The Turners had been lent for an exhibition by the Tate Gallery in London. The Friedrich belonged to the Kunsthalle Hamburg.

Another guard who was unable to reach his colleague by radio set off the gallery's alarm. The thugs ran through the delivery entrance and escaped in a stolen car.

Nearly nine years later, and after the Tate had shelled out almost \$5 million for legal fees, travel, and expenses for information leading to the recovery of the Turners, the paintings were back on the walls in London.

The story of the investigation takes up the major part of *Art Theft and the Case of the Stolen Turners* by Sandy Nairne, who coordinated the recovery. He was then director of programs for the Tate and is now director of London's National Portrait Gallery. Nairne also explores other famous thefts, speculates about why thieves steal well-known works of art that cannot be sold, and raises ethical questions relating to fees and payments in art-recovery operations.

This is an engrossing volume, published by Reaktion Books Ltd., with behind-the-scenes stories of an incredibly complicated recovery that included not only the Tate but also Scotland Yard, Britain's High Court, the Department for National Heritage, the Charity



▲ Sandy Nairne (right) and Tate conservator Roy Perry with Turner's *Shade and Darkness* after its recovery in Frankfurt in July 2000.

## When Is a Reward Not a Reward?

**Experts disagree over whether paying for information leading to the recovery of stolen art might actually encourage more thefts**

BY MELTON ELLIOTT

Commission, and the Attorney General's Office, as well as the Frankfurt Prosecutor's Office and the German Federal Criminal Police.

Theories about the thieves vary, Nairne writes. The most unusual was put forth by a critic who implied that there are links between possessive behavior in relation to high-value works of art and male sexual conquest.

The key questions in the book are: When is a reward not a reward? Was the Tate, as the *Times* of London put it, too eager to reward the thieves and the sellers of the Turners? And did the institution pay a price that will encourage future art thefts?

Nairne writes: "Offering rewards or paying for information leading to recoveries, like the use of registered informers, is part of police practice and distinct from an individual or institution simply offering to buy back a stolen work. Rewards, however, need great care as to the conditions under which they should be paid to ensure that they do not benefit criminals involved in a robbery."

I asked two of the world's top private investigators—Charles Hill, who was once an important member of Scotland Yard's fabled Art and Antiques Squad, and Robert Wittman, who headed the FBI's Art Crime Team—about the case.

Hill said: "Sandy Nairne would have passed muster as a medieval scholastic philosopher meditating on how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. But back to paying rewards: it is the only practical way to recover priceless paintings stolen by dangerous philistines. The payment has to be reasonable and legal, and it must be done in such a way that it lessens the chances of encouraging the bastards to steal more priceless pictures or other works of art. I think Sandy Nairne and

Nicholas Serota [director of the Tate] satisfied those criteria.

"There is a dilemma between paying crooks money for the return of stolen things that may reward their crookery and the human need to have an esthetic value for works of art, in particular to be stewards, in a biblical sense, of those that need to be preserved."

"Generally we cannot allow criminals to benefit from their property crimes. However, that must be balanced by our moral duty to preserve great works of art for posterity as best we can. In our civilized global society, we have to make exceptions to our belief that crime must not pay. Recoveries therefore must be proportionate activities where the recovery is not done at any cost, but realistically at some cost."

Wittman said: "Paying a reward with no questions asked creates crime. A prime example of this occurred in Britain some years ago when the same paintings were stolen over and over again. Insurance companies were paying rewards to criminals and third-party negotiators."

He added: "We use offers of rewards all the time. And they would be paid if the people are not part of the crime. I recently offered a \$25,000 reward for information leading to the recovery of a Renoir stolen in Texas."

Richard Ellis, another alumnus of the Scotland Yard Art and Antiques Squad, has some reservations about rewards. He spoke at a conference sponsored by AXA Art Insurance several years ago. "There can be a serious downside to the advertising of rewards," Ellis said, "and their indiscriminate use has in the past acted only to encourage criminals to commit more thefts in the mistaken belief that the reward offered is little more than a price tag and that they will in effect be able to sell back the stolen

art to the owners or to their insurers. There is a fine line between paying a genuine informant a reward for information given, and the use of a reward to buy back stolen property and for the investigator it is an area that is legally fraught and requires great care."

Nairne writes that many people take a hard line and "argue that any kind of payment is bad in principle and comparable to human hostage cases where any payment is seen as wrong, since it encourages more hostage taking."

ranging from two to eight years. Two men accused of providing keys to the Schirn Kunsthalle were acquitted.

The paintings had been insured in 1994 for about \$18 million each. In 1996, after the theft, insurers paid about \$36 million to the Tate, and title to the works passed to the insurance company. In 1998, the Tate took a gamble and paid back about \$13 million to the insurers for ownership rights. The Tate then received permission from the High Court in England to spend about \$5 million of the insurance payout to fund the recovery.

The Turners were said to be recovered in good condition except for "a slight abrasion or two." The Friedrich was returned in 2003 through a lawyer acting as intermediary. He was reported to have been paid a fee.

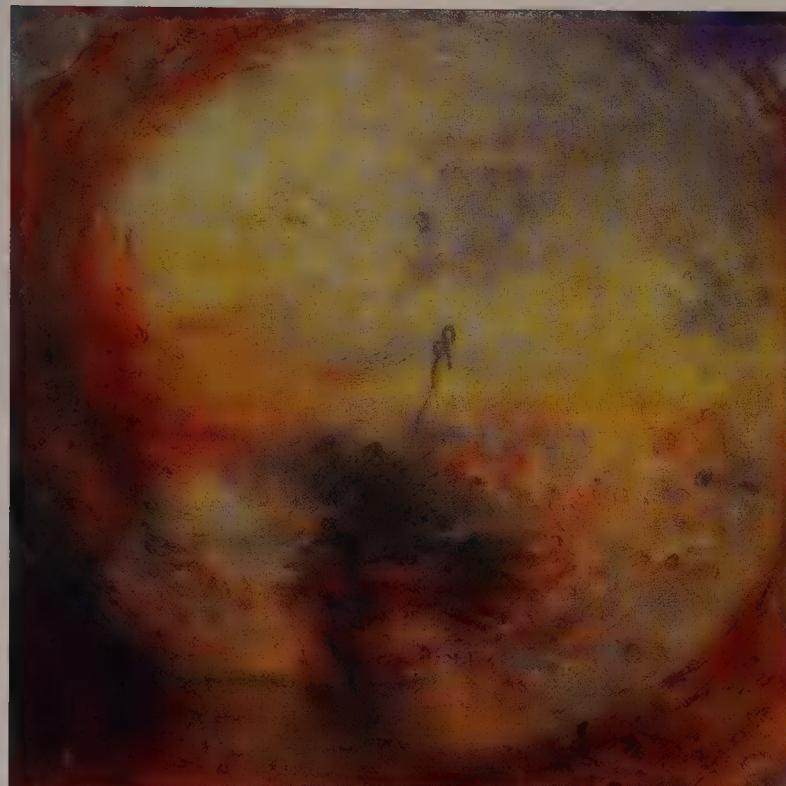
Not all claims of rewards for information leading to a recovery of stolen paintings are successful. In 2006, a painting by Goya was stolen from a truck en route from the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio to the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The truck was parked at the Howard Johnson Inn near Bartonsville, Pennsylvania, when the theft took place.

"A reward of up to \$50,000 was put out for information leading to the recovery," Wittman told me. "A week later, we got a call from an attorney. He said he had a client who had found the Goya hidden in a wall in his basement. His story was that his son-in-law had stolen it. We found out that the night of the theft the son-in-law was actually in jail. And this guy had stolen it. Actually, he had been stealing construction tools, and he thought the crate with the Goya had had construction tools. He got seven years."

He quotes Vernon Rapley, former head of the Art and Antiques Squad, as saying that "we should not negotiate with these people."

Rapley said: "A reward which is subject to proper conditions and leads to a successful conviction still has a place—but that is the practice in this country, whereas in some countries they are willing to pay for the return of stolen property with very few further questions being asked. And it is continually tried here."

Three men were convicted of the Turner thefts and received sentences



▲ Also recovered, Turner's *Light and Color*. Both works were on loan to the Schirn Kunsthalle.

Milton Esterow is editor and publisher of ARTnews.



▲ Max Hollein, striking a pose borrowed from Tischbein's famous 1787 portrait of Goethe.

## When 'No' Means 'Maybe'

Germany's Max Hollein is bringing a creative—and distinctly American—approach to the business of art museums

BY MICHAEL Z. WISE

**A**s right-hand man to then-Guggenheim Foundation director Thomas Krens in the 1990s, Max Hollein witnessed an explosive period of global museum expansion at close range. Hollein left the Guggenheim in 2001 to become the head of the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, Germany, and by 2006 he had assumed the directorship of two more of the city's museums, the Städel and the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection.

While the Guggenheim has been forced to retrench over the last decade, Hollein has used the same period to energize the triumvirate of institutions he leads. The 42-year-old son of Viennese architect Hans Hollein has helped usher in a new era of private support for German culture.

Max Hollein has overseen the re-installation of the Liebieghaus's collection and supervised the \$65 million expansion and renovation of the Städel. The latter project, scheduled for completion next month, includes the construction of subterranean exhibition galleries under a courtyard of the museum's late-19th-century premises. Designed by Frankfurt architects schneider+ schumacher, the addition has a slightly curved ceiling perforated

by round skylights. What the visitor sees from outside is an undulating lawn with a slight bubble rising at its center.

The new space will house a burgeoning collection of contemporary art, swelled by innovative agreements that Hollein hammered out with Deutsche Bank to display in perpetuity 600 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper from the bank's collection, as well as 200 photographs owned by DZ Bank.

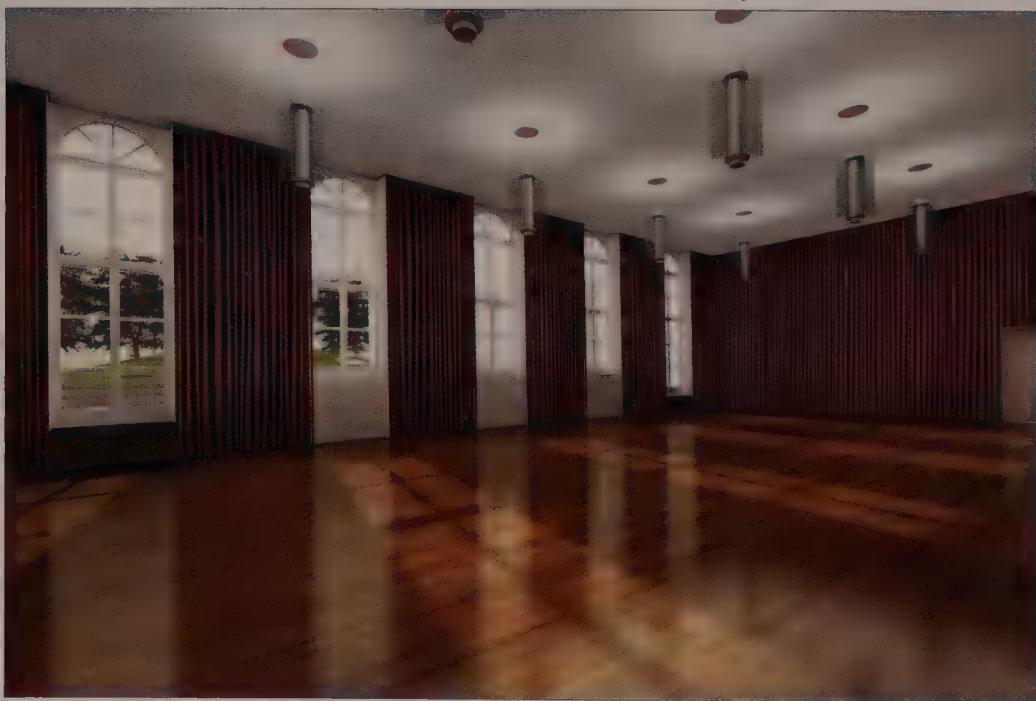
With the Städel and the Liebieghaus located on the southern bank of the River Main and the Schirn on its northern bank, Hollein often bicycles the short distance from one institution to the other. Holding degrees in both art history and business administration, he also veers easily from the city's galleries to its corporate boardrooms.

Deutsche Bank's corporate art collection comprises 55,000 works, bought for the workplace but now largely in storage. "We thought there was a possibility for us there," Hollein says. "We found a way to legally ensure that these works

are always with the museum but formally on permanent loan."

Under Hollein, the Städel has maintained its focus on Old Masters, even as it has expanded its contemporary holdings. A 2009 Botticelli exhibition

▼ A rendering of Thomas Demand's room installation at the Städel, 2011, features ersatz curtains hung throughout a gallery.



drew a record 370,000 visitors. Other shows have been devoted to Rogier van der Weyden and Lucas Cranach; a major Claude Lorrain exhibition is forthcoming. Meanwhile, the German sculptor and photographer Thomas Demand recently completed a new site-specific work, involving trompe l'oeil curtains made of paper and then photographed onto textile panels.

Hollein describes the Städel as "the odd man out in the German museum scene, where all the museums are basically run by the public sector." The Städel, by contrast, was established in 1815 by merchant Johann Friedrich Städel as a private foundation. Although it now receives 20 percent of its operational budget from the city of Frankfurt, with a nominal amount from the state of Hesse, the bulk of its funding still derives from private sources.

Hollein's years at the Guggenheim were both formative and a lucky break; he concedes that he got the job through his father's connection to Krens, established when the architect worked on the never-realized Salzburg branch of the museum. "Coming from a European framework," Hollein says, "I was very attracted by the self-confidence of the whole situation." He was there when the Guggenheim added the Bilbao museum and the branches in Berlin, Las Vegas, and SoHo, in lower Manhattan. "It was an education in sponsorship and how you can drum up support," he says.

Hollein left New York before the collapse of much of the Guggenheim's financial support led to the closure of the Las Vegas and SoHo outposts. Asked if the abrupt end to the boom years proved sobering, Hollein says he



**A**n undulating lawn covers the perforated ceiling of the Städel's new subterranean addition. Above, the lawn under construction and the view from underground of the topping-off ceremony.

learned "to maintain focus on what you're really in for in the museum world, which is close touch with artists. I got a bit detached from that."

How has he managed to change the German fund-raising model? "A certain business background helps you a bit in speaking the same language," Hollein says. "But what was most helpful for me was adopting the New York attitude. A German person would take no as an answer and say, 'Okay, that's a decline.' From my experience at the Guggenheim, I learned that a no means I haven't phrased my question correctly. So you come back again with a different angle. You try to be persuasive but

also persistent in finding a solution." At the same time, Hollein insists, "programming is not geared towards maximizing attendance nor towards being an ideal platform for sponsors."

His success at the three diverse Frankfurt institutions, which keep separate curatorial staffs, led him to be considered recently for the top posts at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and the National Museums of Berlin. But Hollein denies reports that he was ever a finalist to succeed Philippe de Montebello at the Metropolitan Museum

of Art in 2008, before that job went to Thomas Campbell.

"He is clearly in demand," says Felix Semmelroth, Frankfurt's municipal cultural commissioner. "He has considerably raised the cultural profile of Frankfurt and has very adroitly brought over techniques from America, without attempting to replicate them exactly, since we have very different political and economic preconditions."

For the moment, Hollein says he's content to stay in Frankfurt, where he has extended his contracts at all three museums until 2015. "We are showing a certain path," he says. "Museums in Europe are all scrambling to keep up the level of public-sector support. It's a success if you can maintain it. But you can gain momentum only through private support, and we're a prime example of how that can be done. I'm using certain methods and professionalism to make the institutions flourish."

*Michael Z. Wise has written on culture and foreign affairs for the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and Travel + Leisure.*

# Scenes from a Mirage?

**Behind the delays at Abu Dhabi's museum projects**

BY MICHAEL Z. WEST

When Frank Gehry first set eyes on the barren site designated for the Guggenheim Museum in Abu Dhabi, he said, "It gives new meaning to the phrase 'starting from scratch.'" Five years later, Gehry's design, envisioned as part of a cultural Xanadu, has yet to appear on the desolate land.

The possibility arose last fall that the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and several other grand cultural schemes might prove to have been a mirage on the desert sands of this oil-rich state when the government-backed developer in charge of the projects announced delays in construction and opening dates.

While the Guggenheim issued a statement insisting that the project was moving ahead, Gehry himself sounded less certain, saying that he was going to pursue projects in Asia. "The Abu Dhabi building we've been working on in the last five to six years has been stopped, and that's painful," he told *Bloomberg News* on October 25.

The Abu Dhabi Tourism Development



& Investment Company (TDIC) announced delays for not only the Guggenheim but also for a huge new branch of the Louvre, designed by Jean Nouvel, and for the new Zayed National Museum, designed by Norman Foster with technical assistance from the British Museum. All are slated to be built on Saadiyat Island, a short drive from downtown Abu Dhabi.

The TDIC attributed the delays to "the immense magnitude of the work" and, stressing that acquisition of artworks was already under way, said that it would announce new opening dates "in due course." Its website makes no mention of opening dates for the planned performing-arts center designed by Zaha Hadid and a maritime museum by Tadao Ando, but a spokesman said those structures were part of a later phase of development.

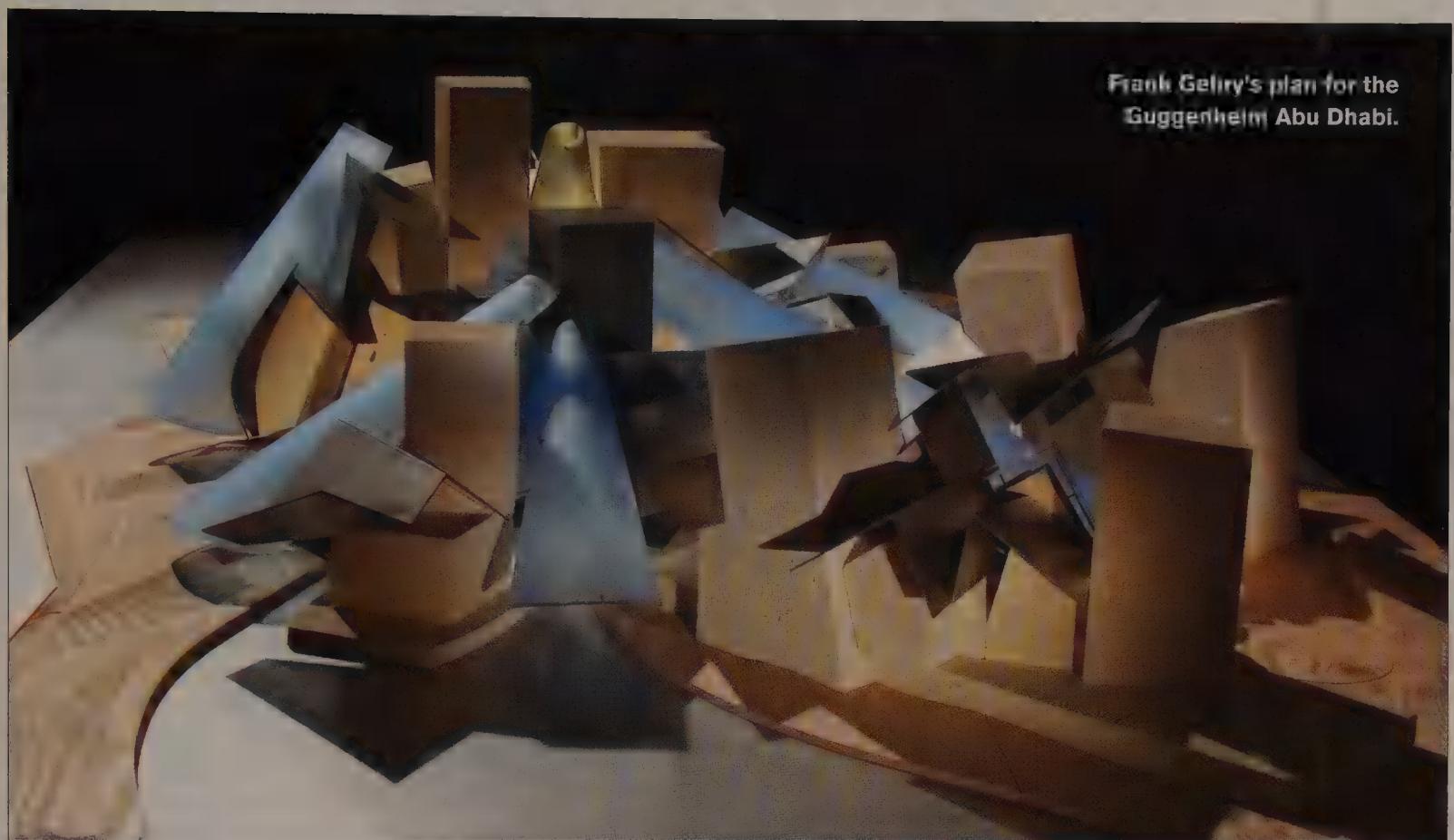
"It is just the first obvious crack in an image which was perhaps always first and foremost a Western fata morgana," Michael Schindhelm, the German impresario who was hired to manage a similarly ambitious, never realized cul-

tural program in Dubai, told *ARTnews*. Schindhelm quit his job in 2009 after a collapse in the real-estate market and other economic problems forced Dubai to pull the plug on its plans for a massive Museum of World Cultures and its Hadid-designed Opera House.

"Abu Dhabi, like Dubai before, wanted to do too much too fast," says Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, professor of political science at Emirates University. "The strategy is not sustainable. There is a rethinking. But things are still in the pipeline. They are going at it at a slower pace."

Larry Beasley, former codirector of city planning for Vancouver, who has been advising the Abu Dhabi government, says he believed the museum delays were due primarily to a temporary financial crunch. "It's a momentary glitch," Beasley says. "They still have a tidal wave of money coming in. The money issues will start sorting themselves out."

Much has changed economically and politically since the museum plans were announced some five years ago. Abu



Frank Gehry's plan for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

Dhabi, which holds 9 percent of the world's oil reserves and serves as capital of the United Arab Emirates, bailed out fellow emirate Dubai from economic woes two years ago, but it is now facing financial pressures of its own. The poor global economic outlook threatens development of Abu Dhabi's real-estate and tourism markets and weakens demand for some 30 new hotels planned for Saadiyat Island, along with villas, marinas, and golf courses.

The Emirates, seven in total, including Abu Dhabi, have so far been spared the political unrest enveloping much of the Arab world. But in recent months, the Arabic-language press in the UAE has emphasized efforts by leadership to meet the needs of Emirati citizens.

"It would be hard to make a strong argument that a Guggenheim, a Louvre, or a Zaha Hadid performance center really reflects the needs of Emirati citizens," says an informed foreign observer in the region. Anxieties about potential local opposition to these projects can be detected in the recent official spotlight placed on plans for the

Zayed National Museum. Diplomats cite increasing rhetoric by Emirati leaders concerned with stressing how these projects can bolster national identity and serve as flagships of pride not just for Abu Dhabi but for the UAE as a whole. Perhaps in an effort to head off popular dissatisfaction, the UAE government has boosted spending on infrastructure in less-developed parts of the country.

The extent to which the Guggenheim should emphasize Western and global exhibition content in relation to Arab artistic production is likely to pose a delicate balancing act for the institution. Informed sources have said that the Guggenheim has recently seemed to be focusing on building a contemporary Arab collection in the belief that it might find greater acceptance with a native audience. "We're doing great stuff," said Suzanne Cotter, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi's curator, but she declined further comment.

Allowing the Guggenheim and other Western institutions to plan Abu Dhabi branches has already opened the UAE

to scrutiny regarding the conditions of thousands of foreign laborers there, as well as press and cultural censorship. In April, the director of a biennial in the emirate of Sharjah was dismissed for including a work that aroused public complaints for its sexual content and references to Allah. Just a few months earlier, images of nude women appearing in a report by the French daily *Le Monde* about the Louvre's plan to purchase Lucas Cranach's painting *The Three Graces* were blacked out upon arrival for sale at Abu Dhabi airport.

As the timeline for opening the museums has lengthened, Abu Dhabi is stressing that new educational programs on the island will help the UAE develop its own know-how and expertise for long-term economic well-being after oil and natural-gas deposits are depleted. The Sorbonne has already opened a campus in Abu Dhabi, and enrolled some 20 students—80 percent of them Emirati—in a master's degree program in museum management that it offers together with the École du Louvre. ■

# A River Runs Through It

**Christo's controversial project to drape ■ Colorado waterway gets the go-ahead**

BY EMMA ALLEN



▲ Christo in his New York studio with a preliminary drawing for *Over the River*.

**D**raping fabric over the area would be akin to putting lipstick on a toddler and entering her in a pageant. . . . Leave her alone—she's beautiful the way she is," read an editorial in the *Denver Post* on the proposed *Over the River* project, by Christo and his late wife and collaborator, Jeanne-Claude. Nevertheless, the duo's \$50 million Colorado installation, which has been in development since 1992, has prevailed against opponents ranging from angry editors to bighorn-sheep activists. The artwork got the go-ahead from federal regulators in early November.

Barring last-minute setbacks, construction of the work—for which 5.9 miles of lustrous fabric will be suspended over portions of a 42-mile stretch of the Arkansas River—will begin this year, with a two-week display of the completed piece set for August 2014 at the soonest. As he has done for previous big installations, Christo will pay for all costs connected with *Over the River* by selling his own artwork, including drawings and diagrams of the project's conception.

Nearly two decades ago, Christo and Jeanne-Claude drove some 14,000 miles through the Rocky Mountains in search of the perfect setting: a river with an east-west orientation, over which light-catching panels might be floated from high riverbanks to be viewed by drivers on neighboring roadways, as well as by people rafting

and fishing below. "We settled on the Arkansas River site in 1996," Christo says, "so the first four years were during the Clinton administration, many years were the Bush administration, and then finally the Obama administration."

Yet of the protracted bureaucratic battle that preceded the governmental

green light, Christo states, "The project developed its own identity through the permitting process. Imagine—we make people think about our work of art before it exists. How many people are thinking about the painting before it's a painting? How many people are thinking about the sculpture before it's a sculpture?"

In the past, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, who passed away in 2009, have wrapped and draped a variety of natural and man-made monuments. Perhaps their most notorious projects were the wrapping of the Reichstag building in Berlin, a piece for which the artists campaigned from 1971 to 1995, and *The Gates* in New York's Central Park, which after 26 years of wrangling was unfurled in 2005. But opposition to *Over the River* was particularly virulent, with local objectors, including a group called Rags Over the Arkansas River, raising highway-safety issues and decrying possible harm to the landscape and wildlife, as well as potential negative economic effects.

Following two years of surveying and scientific analysis, however, the Bureau of Land Management issued a 1,600-plus page Environmental Impact Statement that deemed the artwork sound—so long as more than 100 measures were met to limit harmful disruptions. In fact, the subsequent Record of Decision released by the Department of the Interior ascertained that the project would generate some \$121 million in economic output, drawing in around 400,000 visitors over the course of its fabrication and final display.

"This is the first time in the history of the federal government and in the history of art that a work of art has had an Environmental Impact Statement," Christo explains, adding that in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which first set the conditions under which the U.S. government could rent its vast land holdings, "there is actually not one single word about art, only about bridges, airports, mining, oil-field exploration—no word of art."

Emma Allen is an art and culture writer based in Brooklyn.



#113 (Control) Enamel, aluminum, cable on hardboard. 45" x 37".

R.E. McCosker

◀ Vincent van Gogh's *Self-Portrait as a Painter*, 1887–88.

Van Gogh painted *Tree Roots* just before his death in July 1890.

# Murder, They Wrote

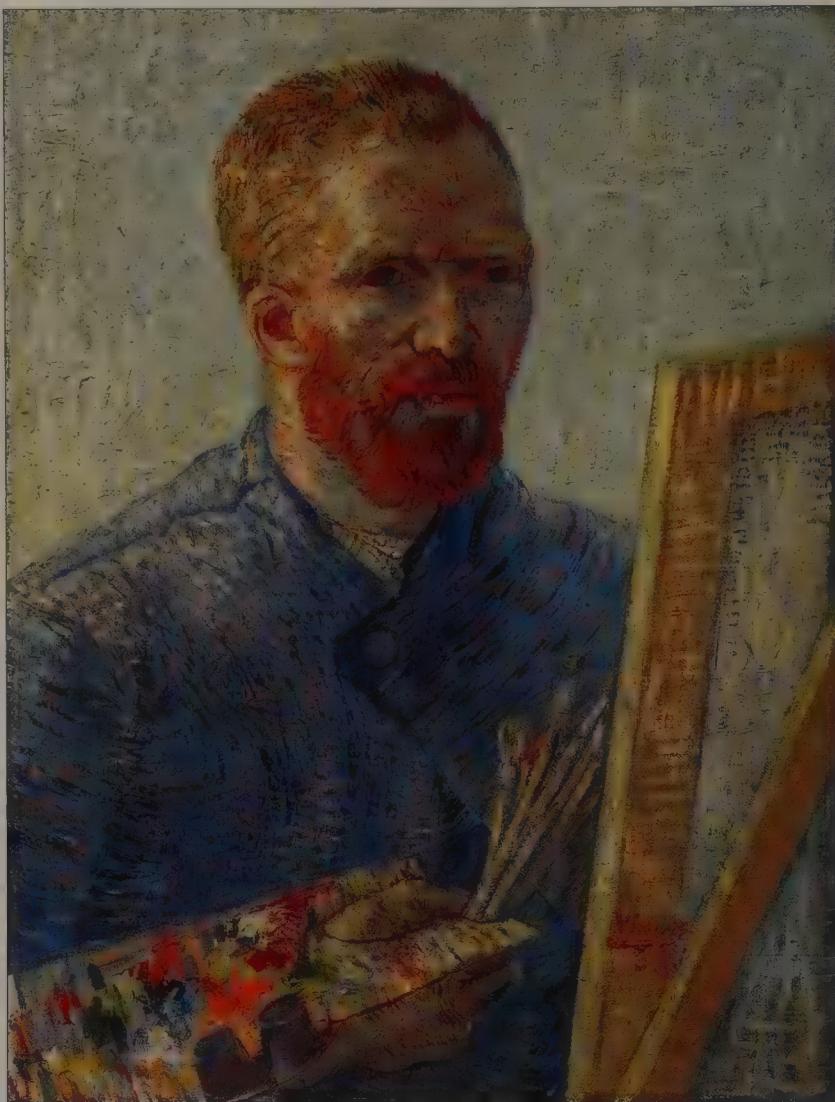
A new biography proposes a controversial theory on van Gogh's death

BY ANDREW LANOI

**A**t the end of their exhaustively researched and largely well received new biography of Vincent van Gogh, Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith propose a novel theory that topples the accepted version of the artist's death: not a suicide attempt in a cornfield near Auvers, the village where Vincent was living, but rather a shooting, possibly accidental, in a scuffle with one or both teenaged brothers inside a walled farmyard. The owner of the gun was a nasty boy named René Secrétan, who was given to teasing Vincent mercilessly. Secrétan, the authors speculate, encountered the artist on the road from the inn where he was staying to the hamlet of Chaponval, in the opposite direction from the cornfield immortalized in *Lust for Life*, the 1956 movie about van Gogh that sealed his suicidal end, in both legend and celluloid, seemingly for good.

Such a hypothesis would explain a great many bewildering details in the conventional accounts of the artist's death: how Vincent managed to drag himself back to the inn with a serious bullet wound (the farmyard was much closer than the cornfield); the disappearance of the gun and the artist's easel, canvases, and paints (Secrétan and his brother cleaned up the evidence, say Naifeh and Smith); the odd position of the wound (through the stomach instead of to the head, the conventional target for a suicide); and van Gogh's mystifying statement to the police before he died. "Do not accuse anyone," he said. "It is I who wanted to kill myself."

In eleven pages of text and six of footnotes, Naifeh and Smith offer a persuasive and detailed scenario, based, among other sources, on interviews with the elderly Secrétan, accounts culled by



the eminent art historian John Rewald in the 1930s, the artist's stated ambivalence toward suicide in his letters to his brother Theo and others, and the alleged proclivities toward exaggeration of people who knew van Gogh, such as his friend the painter Emile Bernard and the innkeeper's daughter, Adeline Ravoux. But it is a reconstruction fraught with "woulda, coulda, shouldas," and more than one art historian has questioned the fine points and wondered about the inclu-

sion of a largely speculative retelling in an otherwise impeccably researched book (see "Putting van Gogh on the Couch," page 56).

"They don't come up with any new evidence," says Leo Jansen, curator of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and editor of the artist's letters. "So they interpret the existing sources from a new perspective." Jansen questions the authors' reliance on the memories of "an old man [Secrétan] who gave an interview in the 1950s about when he was a boy. They say that he is a reliable witness, but they accept only half of his story, which is that as a boy he teased and made fun of van Gogh." Later in their analysis, the biographers decided that he was not such an "excellent witness," in their phrase, because at a certain point in his account he covered up the fact that he was involved himself in the artist's

death. "So either he is a reliable witness or he is not," Jansen says. "I don't think [his recollections] make a very strong argument."

He adds that the writers misinterpreted a description of the trajectory of the fatal bullet. "What was said in an interview in French was that the gun was too 'poorly aimed' to be fatal but that does not necessarily imply that he did not fire the weapon himself." Adds Martin Gayford, art critic for *Bloomberg News* and author of *The Yellow House: Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Nine Turbulent Weeks in Arles*. "One wouldn't expect Vincent to do anything in a normal way anyway, so you might expect that he would make hash of killing himself [by doing so] in a strange way. It's possible that he just finally got into a strange state and wounded himself, which is what he said he'd done when he got back to the inn."

"Here was somebody who was suffering from severe mental disturbance on a two-month cycle. He'd had a very bad attack during his stay at St. Rémy," says Gayford, "and he was due for another one. He had a history of self-harm in various ways, and had possibly attempted to commit suicide by eating poisonous paint in the asylum, which is

what the doctors thought he was trying to do. He brought up the subject of suicide in many of his letters, so it was plainly on his mind, and the fact that he generally dismissed the idea doesn't seem to be conclusive evidence that he wasn't thinking about it."

Jansen is also troubled by the authors' dismissal of Emile Bernard as a reliable source. ("Bernard claimed that he had heard the details from townspeople, especially Gustave Ravoux, the owner of the inn where Vincent died," write Naifeh and Smith. "But Bernard was a prolific and inventive fabricator.") "They push the story aside as not convincing because the man who said it, Bernard, was already creating the myth of van Gogh," says Jansen. "But there was no myth yet. So how could that have been a motive for Bernard to make up a story? And indeed we cannot believe everything Bernard said in his letters, but there are also a lot of things that he did write down properly."

As for the dispute about the cornfield as the site of the shooting versus the farmyard, Gayford believes that Vincent could have dragged himself back to the inn from the farther venue, a journey described in the biography as a "long

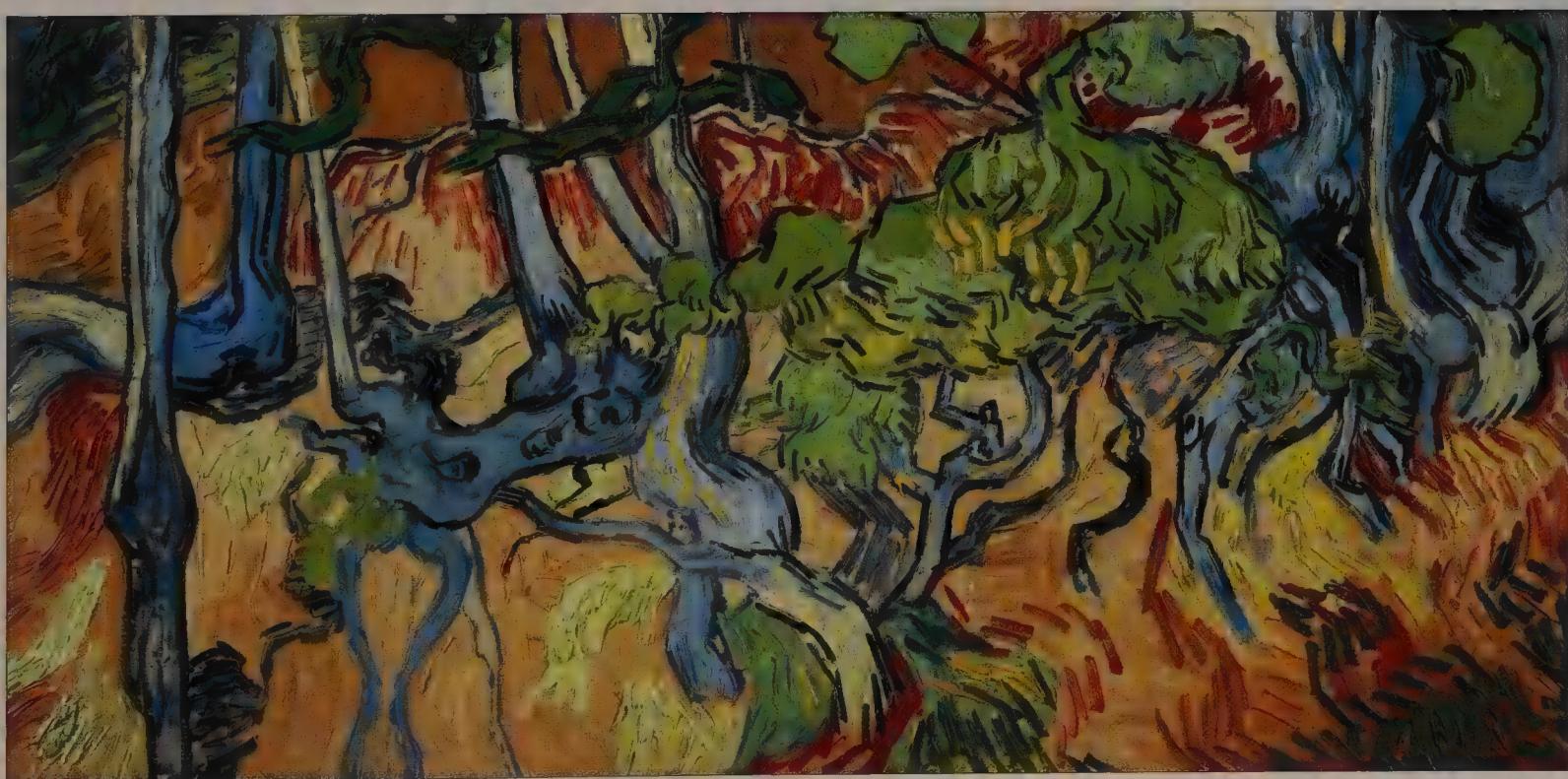
descent . . . along a steep, uneven path down a forested riverbank." Vincent had often performed feats of endurance, "100-mile walks, for instance," notes Gayford. And further, "Dr. Gachet's report is that he had almost none of the symptoms you'd expect with a serious chest wound," so perhaps he was not in such unbearable agony.

The traditional interpretation of suicide "still seems to me to remain more plausible than the other idea, which requires a cover-up story that involves Vincent himself and practically every inhabitant of Auvers over a period of decades," Gayford concludes.

"This is to me nothing more than another layer, maybe more dramatic, to the van Gogh mythology," says Joachim Pissarro, Bershad Professor of Art History at Hunter College in New York and curator of the 2008-9 show "Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night," at the Museum of Modern Art.

"The good news for the van Gogh industry" is that there's nothing that can prove Naifeh and Smith wrong, he adds. "People are either convinced or they are not."

*Ann Landi is a contributing editor of ARTnews.*



# Mission Accomplished

**Curators, architects, and the State Department  
collaborated to showcase American art at the U.S.**

**Mission to the United Nations** BY NANA ASFOUR

The recently completed headquarters for the United States Mission to the United Nations, in New York, is a paean to American diplomacy and democracy—as well as American art. The 26-story building, designed by the late Charles Gwathmey of Gwathmey

Founded in 1986 by four wives of former ambassadors, the foundation has collected works by more than 200 American artists, dispersed to over 140 countries. By the time FAPE chair Jo Carole Lauder approached Storr to get advice about art commissions for

bers. Unsatisfied with what was at hand, he reached out to several artists to ask for additional works. Lynda Benglis offered her favorite artwork, *D'Arrest* (2009), an orange, squiggly surfaced half-globe made of polyurethane, which had been installed above her bed. “The whole energy of FAPE is one of sharing,” Benglis says, “and more and more people are beginning to realize that art is a tool for communicating and for politics. Art does give out energy.” Her piece hangs in the 70-foot-high rotunda on the 22nd floor, below a dome that has been covered in rich blue with thin red stripes, conceived by Sol LeWitt, and across from Ron Gorchov’s site-specific *Totem*, a 19-foot obelisk of conjoined canvases painted in the colors of UN members’ flags.

When choosing where to place the artworks, Storr and his colleagues at FAPE had to work closely with the architects and the State Department. The building, says Robert Siegel, the lead architect on the project after the passing of his partner, “has a higher level of criteria than a federal courthouse, in terms of protection—particularly so because it is situated right in the middle of a city, sitting almost literally on a curb on First Avenue” and East 45th Street. The security criteria meant that the structure could have no exterior cladding that could act as shrapnel in the event of an explosion. The

firm settled on a “monolithic” concrete tower. Siegel is particularly proud of the lobby area, where passersby can see the black angular shapes of a Calder sculpture that sharply contrast with the curved architectural space.

“You are dealing with a government building so there are a lot of restrictions,” Storr says of the installation process. But, he insists, “what the State Department did not do is tell us what the art should be.”

*Nana Asfour is an arts-and-culture writer based in New York.*



▲ The rotunda on the 22nd floor of the new United States Mission to the United Nations features works by Ron Gorchov, Sol LeWitt, and Lynda Benglis (left to right).

Siegel & Associates Architects, houses over 180 works by the country’s most renowned artists—Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Ed Ruscha, and James Rosenquist, to name a few—many of whom offered their art for free.

The artists’ generosity is a testament to the nonprofit organization in charge of placing artworks in American embassies around the world, the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies (FAPE), whose art advisory committee is currently chaired by Robert Storr, dean of the Yale School of Art.

embassies, some ten years ago, the organization had been allocating art to far-flung consulates for over a decade. “There are some circumstances where one may not want to work for the government,” says Storr. “But it was clear that FAPE was a very mixed group in terms of political orientation—there was no political propaganda at stake—and that it was directly about what was interesting to me, which is the art.”

The collection for the U.S. Mission presented a particular challenge for Storr, who had to wade through a pool of gifts from patrons and board mem-



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When Mary Hunt Kahlenberg was a little girl growing up in Wallingford, Connecticut, she played in her family's attic, which was filled with heirlooms—clothes, furniture, and a box of silk ribbons. There were "snippets of silk . . . some striped in amazing colors, others with flowers in lush velvet, as well as lengths of heavy silk grosgrain," she later wrote.

"I give credit to those materials for my interest in textiles, which started very young, making doll clothes and collecting little scraps of things here and there," she told Jennifer Levin in an interview in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* not long ago.

Kahlenberg became one of the world's leading authorities on historical textiles and curated groundbreaking exhibitions that presented textiles as an art form. She died at her home in Santa Fe last October at the age of 71.

She was born in Meriden, Connecticut. Her father ran a nursery and orchard. She majored in art history at Boston University and did graduate research in textiles at the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts and at the Austrian Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna.

In 1967, Kahlenberg became assistant curator at the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. From 1968 to 1978, she was curator and head of the department of textiles and costumes at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where she built its Indonesian and pre-Columbian collections.

The shows she curated ranged from Japanese textiles of the Edo period and ornamental costumes from ancient Peru to Islamic and Kuba textiles. With Anthony Berlant, she organized "The Navajo Blanket," which traveled to a number of cities in the United States



## Seeing Textiles as Art

**Mary Hunt Kahlenberg  
was an expert on weavings  
from around the world**

as well as to Hamburg, Germany.

Critics raved about the exhibition. In an article in *ARTnews* in 1972, Kahlenberg and Berlant wrote: "One might think of a blanket as an Indian rug, next as a Navajo chief-pattern blanket, and then as a second phase *bayeta* chief-pattern blanket of about 1865.

Ultimately there is a focus on the distinct qualities of each blanket, revealing both the sensibility of an individual artist—and the spirit of a people."

Her books included *Walk in Beauty: The Navajo and Their Blankets*, with Berlant; *A Book About Grass: Its Beauty and Uses*; *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Textiles and Objects from the Collections of Lloyd Cotsen and the Neutrogena Corporation*; *Asian Costumes and Textiles from the Bosphorus to Fujiyama*; and *Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles*, with Ruth Barnes.

With her husband, Rob Coffland, she operated the TAI Gallery/Textile Arts in Santa Fe, which specializes in antique and ethnographic textiles, Japanese bamboo art, and photography. In addition to her husband, she is survived by a sister, Nancy Barnes, of Macungie, Pennsylvania.

In 2004, with the artist Richard Tuttle, who is an avid textile collector, Kahlenberg presented an exhibition at the TAI Gallery that featured Indonesian textiles from her extensive collection.

She and Coffland made many trips to Indonesia. "My sense of the depth of Indonesian culture, then and now, is that it would take many lifetimes to even understand the riches there, and that my fascination would never end," she told the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. ■

## News Briefs

## NEWS

■ The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Bronx Museum of the Arts have launched **smART-power**, an initiative that sends American artists around the world to partner with local arts organizations to help underserved youth and develop community-based projects. The first participant, performance and installation artist **Kabir Carter**, will travel to Istanbul, where he will lead workshops with members of the local community to record their oral histories. The other participating artists and artist teams include **Duke Riley**, **Chris "Daze" Ellis**, **Arturo Lindsay**, **Rochelle Feinstein**, **Caroline Woolard**, **Miguel Luciano**, **Samuel Gould**, **Think Tank**, **Pepón**



Kabir Carter.

**Osorio**, **Brett Cook**, **Art Jones**, **Mary Mattingly**, **Xaviera Simmons**, and **Seth Augustine** and **Rachel Shachar**.

**TRANSITIONS**  
■ **Dan Cameron** has been appointed chief curator of the **Orange County Mu-**



Dan Cameron.

**seum of Art** in Newport Beach, California. The founder and former artistic director of the international contemporary-art biennial **Prospect New Orleans**, Cameron succeeds Karen Moss, who is now an adjunct curator for the museum.

■ **Franklin Sirmans** has been named artistic director of the **Prospect.3** biennial, to take place in New Orleans in 2013. Sirmans, currently curator and department head of contemporary art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, replaces Dan Cameron.

■ **Lisa Graziose Corrin** is the new director of the **Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art** at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Most recently director of the Williams College Museum of Art in Williamsburg, Massachusetts, Corrin will succeed David Alan Robertson.

## AWARDS

■ **Jonathan Batkin** is the winner of the **Thaw Publication Award for Excellence in Scholarship on Native North American Art History** for his book *The Native American Curio Trade in New Mexico*. The \$10,000 prize was established by the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, New

York, in honor of Eugene and Clare Thaw.

■ The 2011 **Praemium Imperiale International Art Awards** laureates have been announced. The winners include **Bill Viola** for painting and **Anish Kapoor** for sculpture. The \$195,000 awards, presented by the Japan Art Association, honor lifetime achievement in the arts in categories not covered by the Nobel Prizes.

## OBITUARIES

■ **Norton T. Dodge**, art collector, 84.

Known for amassing the world's largest collection of Soviet dissident art, Norton T. Dodge was

born in 1927 in Oklahoma City. He began visiting the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s as a Harvard doctoral candidate and, in 1962, became friends with a student at a Moscow art institute who introduced him to a community of dissident artists. Dodge

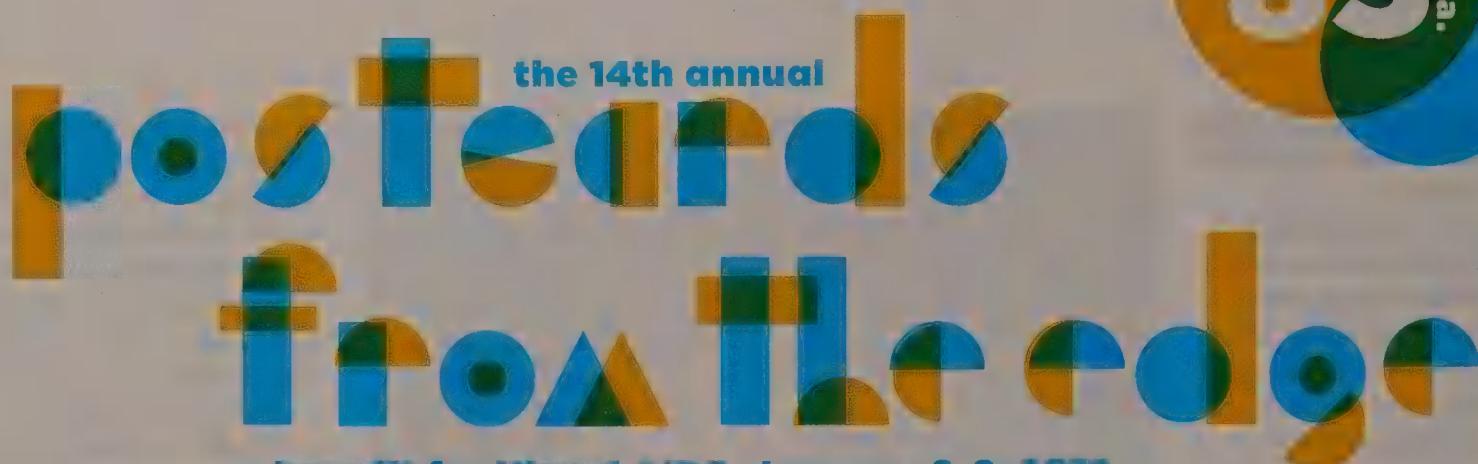
began collecting their work and, though he stopped traveling to the Soviet Union in 1976, he continued to import underground art to the United States. He eventually collected more than 17,000 works by such artists as Vitaly Komar, Alexander Melamid, Dmitri Plavinsky, and Boris Sveshnikov, housing them in barns at his estate in Mechanicsville, Maryland, before donating them to the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University in 1991.

■ **Pat Passlof**, artist, 83.

Patricia Passlof was born in 1928 in Brunswick, Georgia, and studied with de Kooning at Black Mountain College in North Carolina before earning a bachelor's degree from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. In the late 1940s, she moved to New York and took private lessons from de Kooning. A member of the New York School of Abstract Expressionists, Passlof is known for her thick application of oil paint and masterful use of color.



Pat Passlof.



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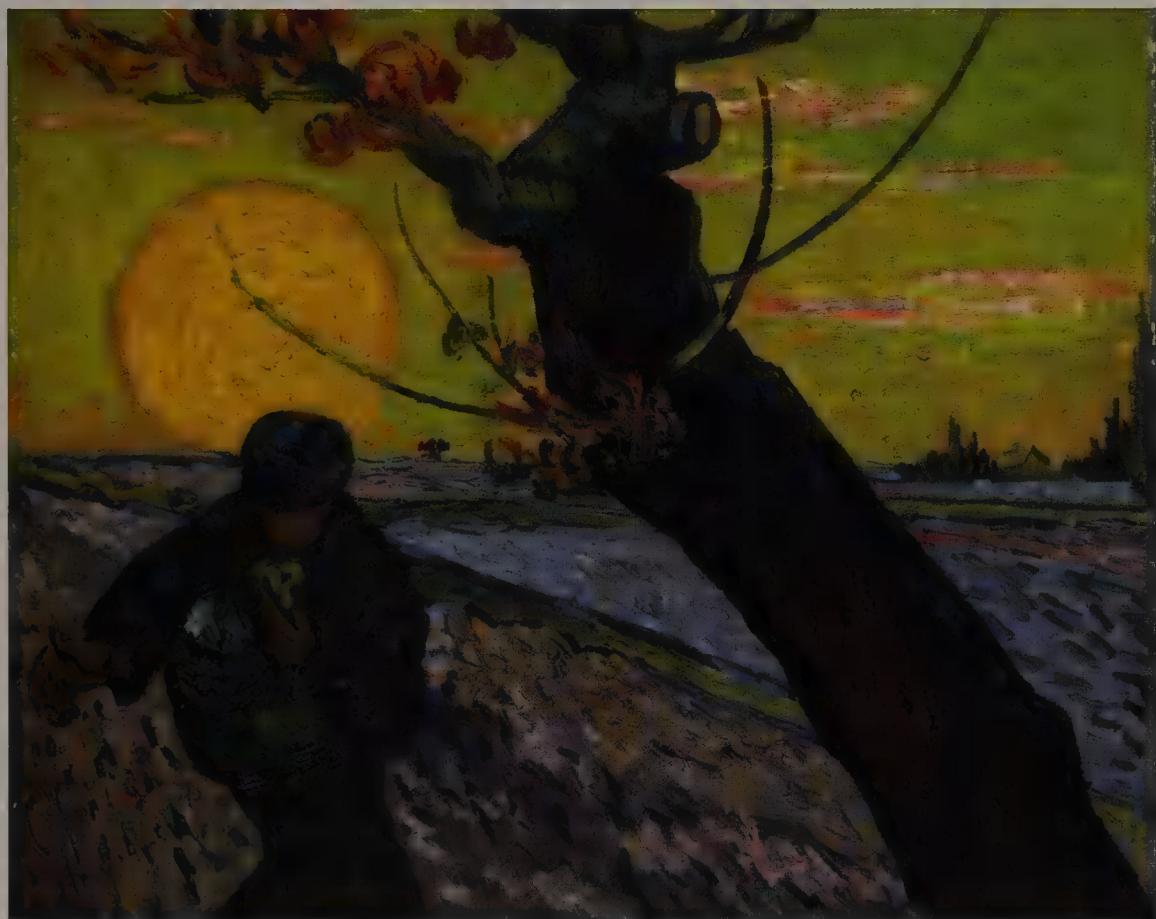
# Putting van Gogh on the Couch

**Van Gogh: The Life**

**By Steven Naifeh and  
Gregory White Smith**

Random House, 976 pages, \$40

**BY MARTIN GAYFORD**



**Vincent van Gogh, *The Sower*, 1888.**

"I don't say that my work is good," Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother on May 21, 1890, "but it's the least bad that I can do." He then added, "All the rest, relations with people, is very secondary, because I have no talent for that." On that day, he had just over two months to live and a surprisingly large number of world-famous paintings still to produce.

It is, of course, his work—both as a painter and a letter writer—that has made van Gogh one of the most monumental cultural figures in history. But it is the other side of Vincent's existence—"all the rest, relations with people"—that Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith focus on in *Van Gogh: The Life*. At more than 900 pages, plus a mass of notes sensibly located online, the book itself is quite a monument.

This is, without question, the best full biography of van Gogh to date. Its main rival, Jan Hulsker's *Vincent and Theo Van Gogh: A Dual Biography*, from 1990, is both drab and hagiographical. *Van Gogh: The Life* is highly readable and full of fresh interpretations. One of those interpretations—that Vincent did not, as has always been believed, commit suicide—is startling enough to have made newspaper headlines around the world.

Far from presenting Vincent as a saint and martyr, Naifeh and Smith, in the manner of many modern biographers, emphasize their subject's warts and flaws. And Vincent, unquestionably, had many. Neurotically argumentative, unstoppably verbose, disturbingly irrational, intermittently drunken and unwashed—he re-

peled people. "It was unpleasant to be with him," as an inhabitant of Nuenen, the Dutch village in which the artist spent an unhappy period living with his parents, succinctly put it.

That was a widespread verdict. Even his devoted brother, Theo, seems to have rationed person-to-person encounters. (Theo never visited Vincent during his year in the hospital

at Saint Rémy.) Viewed on the level of social ineptitude, Vincent's short life was a sequence of humiliations, failures, and self-inflicted disasters.

Indeed, the story was so bleak near the end, in Auvers, that he became oppressed by a sense of failure and filled with fears of another attack of mania. "My life is threatened at the very root. My steps are wavering," he wrote. He felt "a certain horror" when he thought of the future and, as Naifeh and Smith bluntly insist, had "no friends at all." All of this seems to point to suicide, so it is surprising when the authors abruptly reverse course, arguing that Vincent did not intend to kill himself and was instead accidentally shot by a teenager (see "Murder, They Wrote," page 48).

Reading this new account, it is possible forget that here was one of the greatest artists who has ever lived. The authors tend to downplay Vincent's achievements. He is criticized for his urge to paint portraits (Naifeh and Smith prefer his landscapes) and scolded for poor draftsmanship, a view contrary, for example, to that of Lucian Freud, who once told me that he had never seen anything by van Gogh that wasn't marvelous.

The motivations for van Gogh's choices as a painter are always presented as psychologically driven. His move to wide-format canvases in his last weeks at Auvers, for instance, is interpreted as a ploy to lure Theo and his family into joining him in the countryside by painting panoramic pictures of a rural paradise.

But at least some of the time, Vincent was driven by purely artistic urges. Those would largely explain his abrupt relocation to the south of France, in 1888, which Naifeh and Smith find puzzling. What the artist wrote must have been true: he felt a need for brighter colors and stronger light.

Some of Vincent's personal problems surely derived from the volcanic strength of his talent. He was a great painter with a radical vision surrounded by narrow-minded provincial philistines for much of his time in rustic France and the Netherlands. The fundamental shortcoming of this often excellent book is that the authors, in their eagerness to accentuate the negative and compose a driving narrative, leave it a little mysterious how this crazed outcast could have created great and enduring masterpieces in both painting and literature. The lives of artists can be fascinating to read about but do not necessarily explain the power of their works. ■

*Martin Gayford is chief art critic for Bloomberg News and author of *The Yellow House: Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Nine Turbulent Weeks in Provence*.*



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Howard Schatz,  
*Pregnancy Study*, archival pigment print, 2010.

## Pregnant Pause

With Child

By Howard Schatz;  
Foreword by Vicki Goldberg

Glitterati, 176 pages, \$95

In his most recent monograph, Howard Schatz turns his camera on the pregnant body. Schatz, a regular contributor to *Vanity Fair*, is known for his artistic depictions of celebrities. He has also produced several series of nudes, in which he emphasizes the formal qualities of musculature, rendering the lithe surfaces of legs, torsos, backs, and buttocks like beautifully carved classical statues. In the more than 150 black-and-white photographs in *With Child*, he treats the pregnant body similarly, homing in on the dramatic shapes that the metamorphosis yields, from start to finish. It's a refreshing take on maternity imagery.

What stands out is a distinct lack of the sentimentality that often accompanies such explorations of the subject of pregnancy. These are formal figure studies rather than commemorations. The women (all of whom have extraordinarily svelte bodies) are posed to emphasize their bulbous parts—whether bellies or breasts—and often their faces are cut off or not visible, so there is little connection to their interior dialogues.

The depiction of skin is also key. Using light and shadow strategically and playing with different exposure times, Schatz creates a surprising range of effects on the surfaces of these bodily forms, from whitened-out

perfection—evocative of alabaster—to glistening silver, which recalls steel. Indeed, the photos possess the cool refinement of sculpture—an intriguing contrast to the rather messy biological process going on within the expectant mothers.

Schatz practiced as an ophthalmologist before taking up photography, and while the images here are not clinical, one can sense his ability to view the human body from a medical perspective. Like works of art in progress, these reproducing bodies are undergoing a thoroughly physical transformation. He captures some women with relatively flat tummies, others midway through gestation, some on the verge of delivery, and yet others with their newborns. Each phase presents a different opportunity for formal investigation.

In her insightful foreword, art critic Vicki Goldberg notes that Schatz has been photographing pregnant women for over 20 years. Throughout that time he has clearly focused on pure form and process, while still conveying an appreciation for the body and all that it can do.

—Meredith Mendelsohn

## Portrait of an Artist

A Bigger Message:  
Conversations with David Hockney

By Martin Gayford

Thames & Hudson, 248 pages, \$34.95

In this charming book, Martin Gayford affectionately portrays David Hockney through his conversations with the artist over the past decade. Hockney, who has been a colorful



*Felled Trees on Woldgate*, 2008,  
an oil-on-canvas diptych by David Hockney.

and formidable presence in the art world since the early 1960s, remains a quixotic practitioner of painting, graphic arts, photography, set design, and scholarly writing. After leaving Los Angeles, which had been his adoptive hometown and also a kind of muse for over 25 years, Hockney now lives in the seaside town of Bridlington, England, near the chalk-formed hills of the Yorkshire Wolds, where he once went wandering as a teenager. Even into his 70s, he remains a prolific art maker and a prodigious consumer of nature's visual buffet.

Nearly every topic covered here arises from Hockney's present preoccupation with looking at (and recreating) what he calls "the infinite variety of nature." Dialogues with the avuncular and endlessly curious artist involve analyses of light, landscape, and changes of season and are arranged according to dominant theme or artistic medium. Perhaps most compelling is Hockney's embrace of new technology such as the iPhone and iPad, which he utilizes daily to "paint" with and interpret the world around him. Gayford, a London contributor to *ARTnews*, presents the tales of these digital drawings with an appreciative tone. Likewise, the author conveys an awe for the intellect and drive of an artist who, despite being a heavy smoker and nearly deaf, remains creatively inexhaustible. Hockney's philosophies on the eye and the mind appear in every section. —*Doug McClemont*

## Ahead of the Pack

Jac Leirner in Conversation with Adele Nelson

By Adele Nelson; Essay by Robert Storr

Fundación Cisneros/Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, 220 pages, \$25

Brazilian artist Jac Leirner has an international following and is celebrated among a certain swath of art aficionados, but her profile is not nearly as high as it should be. The third in an ongoing series of dual-language interviews published by the Fundación Cisneros, a staunch supporter of South American artists, *Jac Leirner in Conversation with Adele Nelson* will hopefully elevate the artist's visibility.

Leirner comes from a notable family of art collectors and is a collector herself, albeit of valueless objects like empty cigarette packs, devalued bank notes, used shopping bags, and discarded airline tickets, which she incorporates into her art. Minimalism and *arte povera* have been major influences on Leirner, but so have experimental film and punk rock. Visual and verbal puns recur throughout her paintings, prints, sculptures, and conceptual pieces.

The book is clearly organized and thoughtful, divided into sections that describe different aspects of Leirner's work and draw the reader into the discussion in easy stages. Art



Jac Leirner's *Lung*, 1987, consists of 1,200 flattened Marlboro packs on polyurethane cord. The artist calls it a "necklace."

historian Adele Nelson provides, often as part of her questions, valuable background information on the artist and her milieu for those of us who are not quite familiar with the trends of our continental neighbors. This format is sometimes pedagogical, but Leirner's responses are always lucid and offer fascinating insights into her projects with an engaging simplicity that belies their conceptual complexity and visual sophistication. Leirner likes the word "enchanting"—which she uses frequently—a term that applies to this documented conversation, as well.

Additionally, there is an essay by curator and critic Robert Storr. In it, he describes his acquisition of *Lung* (1987) from Leirner's São Paulo studio. The piece consists of 1,200 flattened Marlboro packs, a "necklace" strung on two lengths of polyurethane cord. Storr asked if he might have it for the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She said yes, so he rolled it up and packed it in his suitcase—which also seems enchanting.

—*Lilly Wei*

## Why Buildings Matter

The Landmarks of New York, 5th Edition

By Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel

State University of New York Press, 760 pages, \$75

**T**he challenge now is, what bold and innovative direction should preservationists embrace to build on the bedrock accomplishments that have been achieved?" poses Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel in the fifth edition of *The Landmarks of New York*. Her updated tome vividly chronicles the work of the Landmarks Preservation Commission since 1965, created to protect New York City's architectural heritage against purely commercial interests after the regrettable demolition of the majestic Penn Station, in 1963.

Diamonstein-Spielvogel, who served on the commission from 1972 to 1987 and now chairs the Historic Landmarks Preservation Center, gives rich capsules on the cultural

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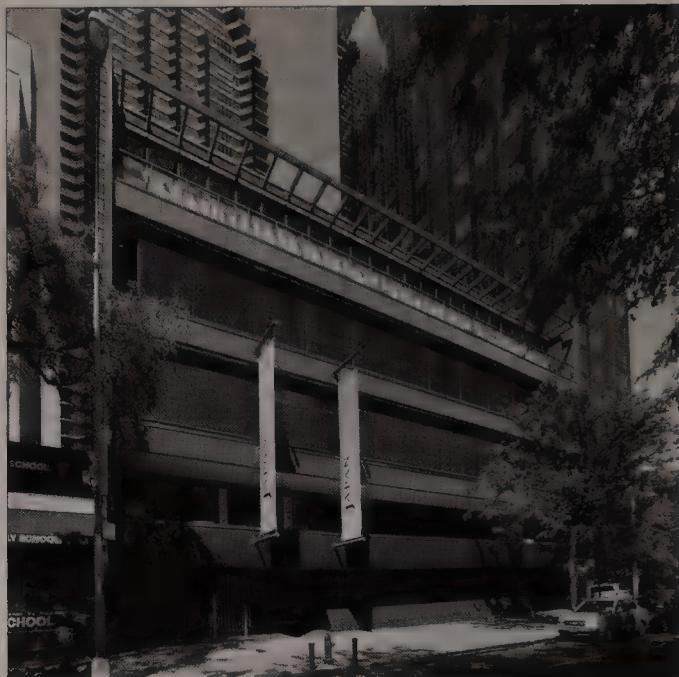
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## BOOKS

significance of each and every one of New York's 1,276 individual landmarks and 102 historic districts. These span from the oldest building in the state, Pieter Claesen Wyckoff's wooden farmhouse, built around 1652 in the Flatlands area of Brooklyn, to the modernist Japan Society building, erected in 1971 in Manhattan and the youngest structure to be designated a landmark to date.

The author notes that buildings between 30 and 50 years old are at greatest peril because they're no longer hip but haven't necessarily garnered loyal followings to defend them. Since the fourth edition was published, in 2004, Diamonstein-Spielvogel has expanded discussion of modern landmarks, adaptive reuse, and the integration of green technology into existing buildings, what she calls the "ultimate act of sustainability." She also ponders the future role



**The modernist Japan Society building in New York, designed by Junzō Yoshimura and completed in 1971.**

of the Landmarks Preservation Commission now that it has largely moved beyond "brushfire rescue operations."

The commission has increasingly focused on neglected banks, theaters, schools, and play centers in the outer boroughs and upper Manhattan. Of the 22 historic districts designated since 2004, 17 fall outside the power center of Manhattan, including the Perry Avenue Historic District, a row of nine freestanding Queen Anne-style houses in the Bronx, now crowded on all sides by six-story apartment buildings, that testifies to the original suburban character of the neighborhood.

Several recently designated landmarks are swimming complexes, among them the citadel-like Jackie Robinson Play Center in upper Manhattan and the Art Moderne-style Tompkinsville Pool on Staten Island. Eleven such pools were built in the 1930s under the Works Progress Administration for residents who couldn't afford to go to Long Island beaches. They were designed with the same spirit of evenhandedness that the commission itself is now embracing in what it chooses to preserve and protect.

**—Hilarie M. Sheets**



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*St. Basil Cathedral*  
48" x 72"

# THE FLORIDA KEYS

## CREATIVITY AND DIVERSITY

Founded by traders, pirates, and travelers from a variety of nations—all with different professions and interests—the Florida Keys carry a colorful heritage. Over time, this diversity of peoples and intentions has made for a uniquely creative environment in a beautiful and storied tropic setting. The arts in the Florida Keys are as vibrant and varied as the archipelago's history itself.

"Key West was founded by utopians fighting for gender, racial, and religious equality," explains Nance Frank of **The Gallery on Greene**. "They set a precedent." As evidence, Frank opens her book on Cuban-born artist Mario Sanchez to show street scenes from the early 20th century, with all races, religions, ages, and social statuses interacting.

Other artists Frank represents reiterate this vision, including Andy Thurber, who paints bars and cafés that draw a diverse clientele—quirky characters who live their own way, a choice locals can appreciate.

Much of Florida Keys art is by nature cheerful and exuberant, like Peter Vey's Impressionist tropical foliage and beach vistas. Artist Bruce McGarey lives on a boat and builds model ships—including shrimp,

smuggler, and Coast Guard vessels—out of locally-found materials. Yet another example of the Florida Keys keeping art "afloat."

The late Jeff MacNelly, a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner best known as the creator of the *Shoe* comic strip, depicted life as he observed it: kooky and endearing but dignified. His work is funny but never condescending: a true Florida Keys perspective. Also witty, The Merger is the most sought-after emerging artist group in Cuba today. Their unconventional sculptures display skill in a variety of media—including stainless steel—in a country where materials are hard to find.

It could also be argued that Keys inhabitants get along because their setting is so pleasant. Looking at Priscilla Coote's landscapes, saturated with shadow and light contrasts, William Bradley Thompson's inviting, colorful living spaces, and the playful seascapes of Harriet Frank, it seems easy to live and let live.

**Gingerbread Square Gallery**, the oldest gallery in Key West, offers a similar diversity, scope, and joy. Though a "conch," (a Key West native), artist Sal Salinero has traveled extensively



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Andy Thurber, *African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2011, watercolor, 24" x 30"; Mario Sanchez, *Old Island Days, Stole'm Together*, 1980s, intaglio, 20" x 18"; Peter Vey, *Coconut & Bougainvillea*, 2011, oil on canvas, 50" x 40"; Bruce McGarey, *The City of Key West*, 2011, model, 36" x 43" x 10"; Priscilla Coote, *Home Sweet Home*, 2011, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"; Jeff MacNelly, *Pig-o-war*, 1999, oil, 40" x 30"; Sal Salinero, *Two Toucans*, 1992, oil on canvas, 36" x 24".



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John Martini, Dreams of Bird Land, 22" x 27", Steel 2011

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PETER VEY  
*All About Mystery 2011, 60" x 48" Oil on Canvas*



THE MEMBER  
*Small, 51" x 23" x 27" Stainless Steel*



WILLIAM BRADLEY THOMPSON  
*Red Rug 2011, 54" x 60" Mixed Media*

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**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Pam Folsom, *House on Virginia*, 2011, oil on canvas, 12" x 16"; Teresa Willis, *Hey Lady*, 2008, acrylic on watercolor paper, 22" x 30"; Nyla Witmore, *Amsterdam Ambience*, 2011, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"; The Merger: Mario Miguel González, Niels Moleiro Luis, & Alain Pino Hernandez, *Cuban Knife*, 2009, polichrome steel, 48" x 8.5" x 38".

and is committed to the cause of the world's rainforests. His paintings of lush foliage encourage preservation and conservation. Painter Michael Palmer conveys more of an island "attitude" than any specific island location in his depictions of rooftops, neighborhoods, and faces. Nyla Witmore paints plein-air French and Italian landscapes in oil, and Pam Folsom applies an almost Mediterranean color palette—sage, berry, terracotta, and indigo—to Key West scenery with her postcard views from open porches.

Teresa Willis, inspired by her own backyard, evolved into fine art from advertising and design. Whether focused on a hibiscus, a cat, a rooster, or a pelican, her bold paintings—displayed in her converted 1927 church gallery, **Blue Turtle**—present strong, singular focal points. Of her pencil drawings of orchids, Willis says her style "covers the spectrum."

Just as many Keys locals resist labeling, **Art@830** owners Christine Scarsella and Tony Gregory wrestled with the tag line for

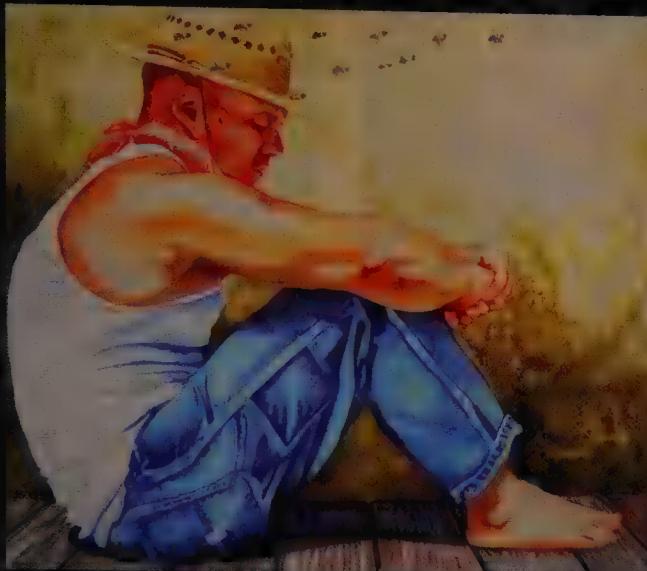
their gallery. "It's multifaceted, diverse, and a mix of decorative and functional. It's feel-good, fun art!" says Scarsella. A visual cornucopia of Keys imagery, **Art@830** shows silk screens of local flora, porcelain figures, jewel-like pendant lamps, jewelry, wooden vases, and centerpiece-worthy glass bowls.

As an artist, **Tony Gregory** says he resists being artistically "pigeon-holed." A successful commercial photographer, his artwork ranges from abstract painting to glass vessels to three-dimensional body painting. "I usually have multiple ideas at once, so it's good having multiple projects at once, too," he says.

Artist Sean P. Callahan's exhibition, "Living at the End of the World," is at **Stone Soup Gallery** in February. It depicts a reinvention of *Lord of the Flies*, incorporating patterns inspired by an extinct Patagonian tribe. In Callahan's telling, the castaways are never rescued, and form a functioning tribe. By freeing his interpretation, Callahan frees the outcome of the story.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Scott Hegan, *Blown Glass Mosaic*, 2011, disk on metal stand, 15" x 24"; Tony Gregory, *Hearts are Wild*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 30"; Fran Decker, *Moonlit*, 2011, acrylic, 18" x 24"; Marlene Miller, *Little Clown*, 2008, stoneware with underglaze and stains, 34" x 16" x 15"; Susan Sugar, *Leaving Shore*, 2011, oil on canvas, 30" x 80" x 2"; Michael Palmer, *Divisions and Connections*, 2011, acrylic and ink on canvas, 36" x 48"; Scott Hartley, *Transparent Embrace*, 2011, blown glass, 22" x 26".



"Head Full of Bees"  
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*Under Over* 2011, 12" x 14" Mixed Media

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**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Sean P. Callahan, *What Boys Dream Of*, 2011, watercolor; Crowds at the Tropic; John James Audubon, *White Pelican*, 1832, hand colored engraving, 29.5" x 39.5"; Alan Kennish, *Beach Loggerhead Key*, 11" x 14"; Christoper Peterson as Joan Rivers on Oscar Night (Tropic Cinema); Sean P. Callahan, *Sitting Shadows*, 2011, watercolor.

For 30 years, the **Lucky Street Gallery** has celebrated the diversity and creativity of local artists in a variety of media. This season, Cathy Rose will present porcelain sculptures; and Michael Haykin will show shimmering water landscapes. Bright plein-air paintings by Robert Burridge will be on view, along with pensive, spiritual mixed-media items by Roberta Marks.

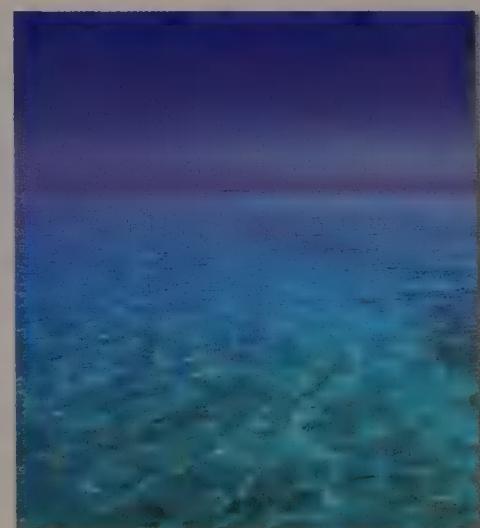
Relatively new to the Keys' art scene, Fran Decker's **Frangipani Gallery** distinguishes itself by showing local artists exclusively. Birds, landscapes, and flora figure prominently. Diverse media fill the gallery, ranging from oil paintings and ceramics to jewelry, stained glass, and needlepoint. "At first, the gallery was informally 'Fran Decker and friends,'" says the owner, who speaks with a warm familiarity about her artists.

John James Audubon famously depicted birds in his renderings, and also showed details of the natural environment: *clusia rosea* behind a Zenaida dove, a brown pelican near a red mangrove. His timeless images—19th century originals and limited edition prints, along with flora and fauna by ten other artists—are on view at the **Audubon House Gallery**.



Fine art photographer **Alan Kennish** captures what he calls those "moments in time when everything around you is in balance, and all is beautiful and serene...The interaction of light, water, and sky is perfect. Time stops." Kennish's seascapes capture striking panoramas of shallow, light-tinged waters surrounding the island chain. More than simply depicting the Florida Keys, Kennish conveys how it feels to be there, to experience the islands. Parts blend into a harmonious whole.

The Florida Keys keep the energy moving with numerous art venues, including **Tropic Cinema**—South Florida's only non-profit multiplex, opened by uncompromising cinephiles in 2004 in a former five-and-dime store. A triplex theater facility, the Tropic screens the best in first-run, indie, and foreign films, as well as documentaries, in a luxurious environment with a gourmet bar and café. The Tropic also hosts community events, from literary lectures to jazz concerts.



"Down by Boca Grande", triptych, archival print on canvas, from the Series "Seascapes"

Alan G. Kennish III

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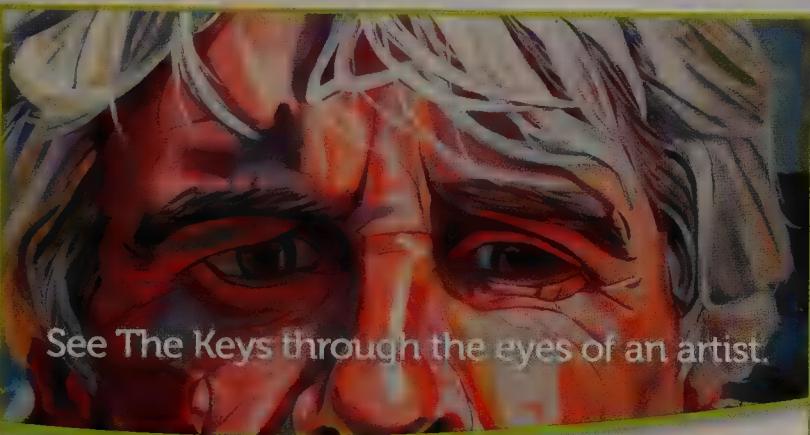
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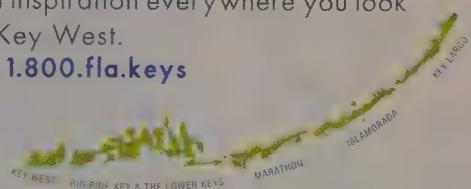
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*Birch Hawks* 1980, 15" x 24" *Intaglio*



JEFF MACNELLY  
*Conch Republic Dog* 1997, 30" Oil on Canvas



ANNY THURBER  
*Ichiban* 2011, 22" x 30" Watercolor

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Marlene Koenig, *Zen Master Says Don't Worship Teapot But Drink Tea*, Encaustic

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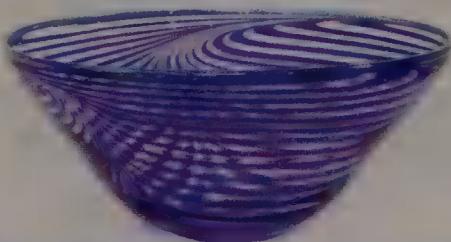
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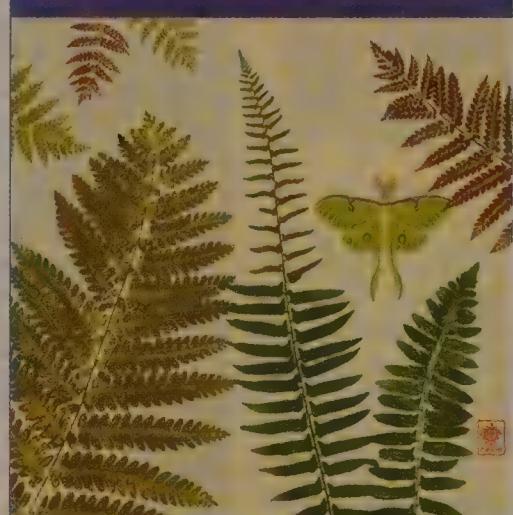
## Art @ 830 Gallery & Studio



Christine Cordone



Tony Gregory

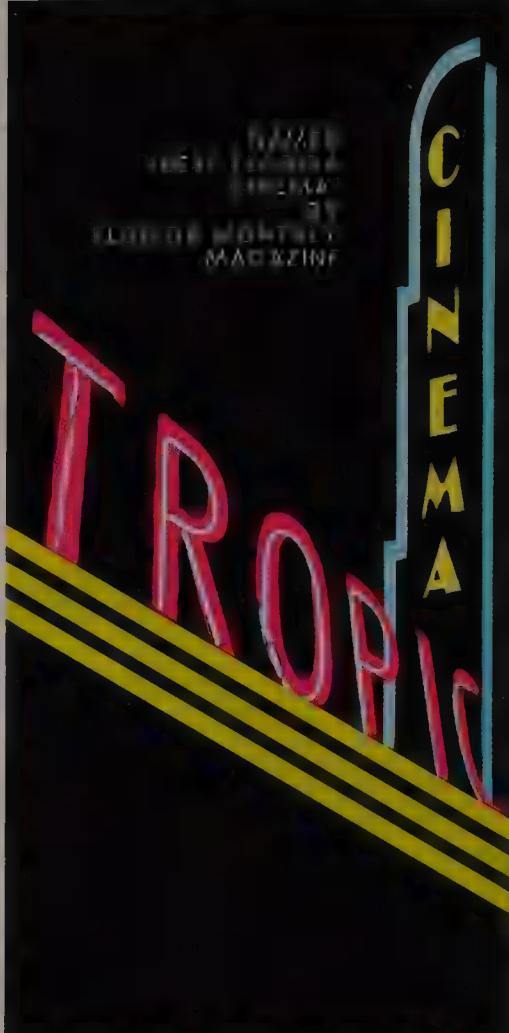


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Based at the historic Key West Armory, **The Studios of Key West** celebrates and supports the islands' unique heritage. The organization offers residencies for literary, visual, and performing artists, and offers ongoing classes and workshops in poetry, acting, figure drawing, silk-screen, and memoir writing for local enthusiasts. Expanding from visual art, TSKW hosts concerts, galas, and burlesque shows. Singer/songwriter Cheryl Wheeler, and pop/rock/folk musician Susan Werner both perform this month.

The **Morada Way Arts and Cultural District** proves that the northern Keys island of Islamorada offers visitors more than sport-fishing. Fourteen area partners—galleries, restaurants, and boutiques—host Third Thursday Walkabouts in which visitors can partake in the artistic, culinary, and retail jewels of the island, as well as art classes and festivals, including the annual Islamorada Fine Art Expo each January.

From capturing the beauty of the environment, to replicating the uplifting colors of the tropics, to teaching the arts and inviting participation, the creative community of the Florida Keys celebrates nature, history, and cultural diversity.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Headresses created by Adam Mcclay, TSKW Artist in Residence, Oct. 2011; William Bradley Thompson, *Quiet Mooring*, 2011, oil stick & acrylic, 36" x 30"; The TSKW Art Car in front of the Historic Armory Building, Home of The Studios of Key West; Artist Michelle Nicole Lowe, with her oil painting, *Home Sweet Home*; Harriet Frank, *Bahia Honda*, 2011, collage watercolor, 13" x 16".

Freelance writer Margit Bisztray has lived in Key West among its artists since 1994. Her work has appeared in *Metropolitan Home*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Dwell*, and *O*.

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oil on canvas, 36x48

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# Command Performance

William Nicholson's group portrait of Canadian generals during World War I is an unusual and haunting war tableau

BY WILLIAM FEAVER



**William Nicholson.**  
His usual subjects  
were portraits,  
still lifes, and  
landscapes.

**D**'you know what's the best unknown picture in London currently?" David Hockney asked me, quizmaster style, one evening six years ago.

"You mean the Canadian generals?" I said. The painting, then on loan to the Royal Academy from the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, had never been exhibited before outside Canada. It is not only the largest William Nicholson ever (about 8 by 10 feet), it is also the most surprising.

"Yes. It's quite wonderful, actually," Hockney said.

Commissioned in 1917 by the Canadian War Memorials Fund as part of a commemoration of Canadian sacrifice and effort in the Great War (with still a year to go), Nicholson's painting is a composition that, far from glorifying the officers involved, assigns them strangely detached stand-in roles. It was, the artist said in a letter to his son Benjamin (later to become better known as Ben Nicholson, the painter), "a Hell of a job." Six brass hats, as lower ranks referred to them, are stood there, businesslike but at ease. It could be the interval or breathing space between a defense or offensive being adopted and executed. Mustaches are worn and boots are as shiny as can be.

William Nicholson had made his name as one of the two Beggarstaff Brothers (actually the other half was his brother-in-law James Pryde), designers in the 1890s of splendidly bold posters. As a portrait painter he took up more or less where Sargent had left off, and in still lifes and small landscape studies he proved himself pretty well up to Manet's standard and Corot's standard respectively.

Nothing, however, quite prepared Nicholson for the challenge of *Canadian Headquarters Staff*. He was working on the picture when, a month before the war ended, he learned that his son Tony had been killed. Others might have been moved to put mud on the generals' boots. Not him: drawing maybe on the example set by Velázquez's *Surrender of Breda* and working from a group photograph staged for the purpose, he put the figures into a holding pattern, poised to command yet conscious of the consequences. Where Velázquez laid on a vast tapestry-effect landscape of military maneuver, Nicholson did the most extraordinary thing: he inserted behind the generals a blown-up view of the shattered city of Ypres, Belgium, photographed from the air.

Not knowing for certain whether Nicholson worked from a small photo or from an actual enlargement (which would have been extraordinary for the time) hardly matters. What he was at pains to suggest could only be that the generals' responsibilities were, so to speak, their backdrop. Cause and effect loomed over them. Their troops had proved themselves at the



Second Battle of Ypres, in April 1915; they had been the first to suffer onslaught by poison gas; Ypres had become a ruin. And here, in his studio, with his civilian hat and coat laid on the chair at the left, Nicholson creates a war tableau devoid of both poignancy and bellicosity. He, the non-combatant, is in charge. Here we see Major General A. D. McRae attending to a map or paperwork while, slightly above head height, a blank sheet of paper fixed to the sepia photograph invites a caption.

This is not a summing up of what became known around then as the War to end Wars, nor is it simply Velázquez updated. It invites detailed examination, and gets it in Patricia Reed's sumptuous *William Nicholson: Catalogue Raisonné of*

**Nicholson didn't glorify the officers he portrayed in *Canadian Headquarters Staff*, commissioned in 1917.**

*the Oil Paintings*, published by Modern Art Press/Yale University Press.

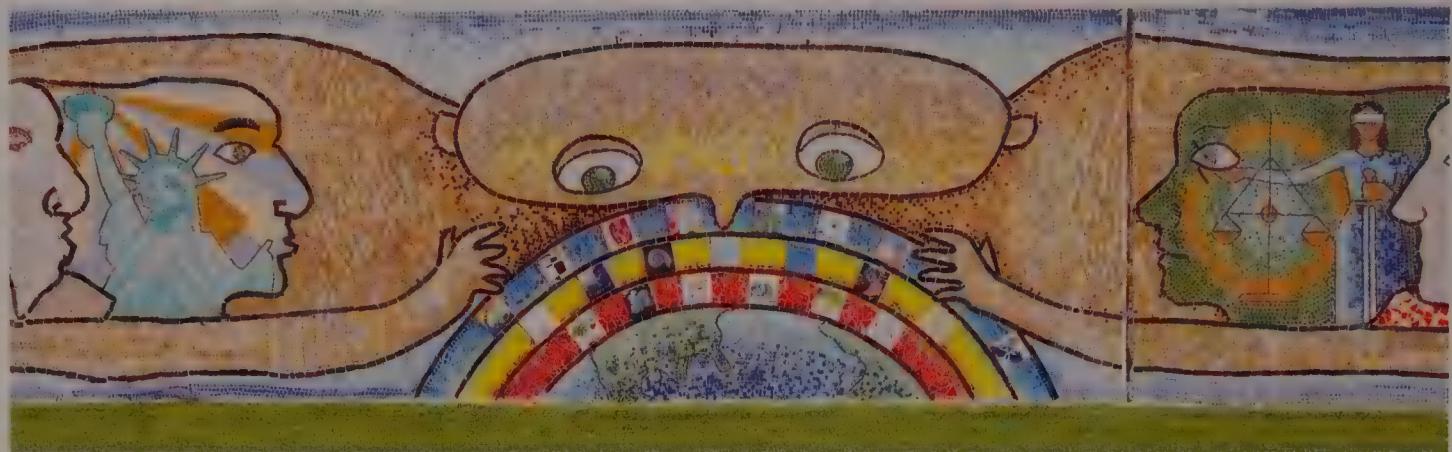
Nicholson was essentially a perpetrator of effects, everything from lustrous elegance to harmonic gloom. His generals parade not authority but wariness. The Cloth Hall of Ypres behind them, obscenely exposed, is a bleached still from the dreadful newsreel of destruction and misery that was to spool on through the century. The polish on the boots matches the glint of melting snow on the Sussex downs he loved to paint daily, before breakfast.

William Feaver is a London correspondent of ARTnews. He is the author of *Lucian Freud* (Rizzoli, 2007).



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# American Art, Alice Walton's Way

The Walmart heiress's controversial museum opens with an inclusive and even quirky selection of American art that reveals an increasing focus on the present

BY PATRICIA FAILING

**I**TTING THE NEW CRYSTAL BRIDGES Museum into the taxonomy of American art museums has not been easy. Conceived and financed by Walmart heiress Alice Walton, the project has inspired such hyperbole as "a museum that will demand attention on a global scale" and "a fig leaf for corporate greed and raw exploitation." Now the doors are open, the collection is on view, and Walton's ambitions can be addressed on quite different terms.

The museum, which opened in November, stands within a 120-acre park in Bentonville, Arkansas. Bentonville (population 35,000) is Alice Walton's childhood home, the location of her father Sam Walton's first five-and-dime store, and now the site of Walmart's world headquarters. The city maintains a picturesque town square but a vast Walmart parking lot, strip malls, and anonymous corporate office buildings dominate the main route from the freeway to the park.

For the visitor entering the park by car, the sensory shift is calculated and abrupt. The 201,000-square-foot complex, designed by architect Moshe Safdie, is settled within a deep forest hollow framed by lush vegetation, a botanical garden, and a series of trails through the woods. A stream fed by the nearby Crystal Springs once ran through the hollow, which

was expanded to accommodate Safdie's design by blasting away tons of rock. Stream water was rechanneled into pipes to supply two large ponds in the center of the complex. A restaurant pavilion and one of the gallery spaces bridge the ponds, inspiring the name of the museum.

The restaurant, an expansive tunnel adjoining the museum's entry hall, is one of the largest and most theatrical public spaces in the complex. Slices of light radiate from ceiling to floor through openings in the beetle-shaped copper roof, falling between massive laminated beams of Arkansas white pine. Glass walls on both sides of the restaurant provide views of two similar copper-topped pavilions apparently floating on the ponds. It is a lush and subtle extravaganza, one financed by the \$1.2 billion donation the Walton family and Walton Family Foundation made to the museum in 2010. Most of the funds are divided into endowments: \$325 million for acquisitions, \$350 million for operations, and \$125 million to maintain the eight pavilions on the site. The foundation established an additional \$20 million endowment to provide free admission for the public.

What the public can expect to see, according to art historian John Wilmerding, who has served as one of Walton's primary advisers, is a collection that ranks "in the top half dozen of American-art museums, maybe higher." Many connoisseurs of American art, however, may not share this

*Patricia Failing is a professor of art history at the University of Washington in Seattle and a contributing editor of ARTnews.*



**The Crystal Bridges Museum, designed by Moshe Safdie. Some of the pavilions seem to float on water diverted from a nearby stream.**





Many New Yorkers still mourn the loss of Asher B. Durand's *Kindred Spirits*, 1849, purchased from the New York Public Library.

assessment. The 18th- and 19th-century paintings line up favorably with American Art History 101, although a number of big names are missing. Some of the works were well known in their previous locations, among them Richard Caton Woodville's *War News from Mexico* (1848), recently sold by the National Academy Museum in New York. Four important paintings—John Singleton Copley's 1765 portrait of Mrs. Theodore Atkinson Jr., Gilbert Stuart's 1797 Constable-Hamilton portrait of George Washington, Francis Guy's *Winter Scene in Brooklyn* (1820), and Asher B. Durand's *Kindred Spirits* (1849)—were owned by the New York Public Library until 2005. The earliest paintings at Crystal Bridges, six portraits of members of the prominent Jewish colonial Levy-Frank family from around 1735, are among the rarest and most historically engaging documents in the collection.

Artists represented in some depth here are Martin Johnson Heade, William Merritt Chase, and John Singer Sargent. Landscapes occupy much of the display, ranging from John Vanderlyn's *Niagara and the Rapids* (1801–2) to first- and second-generation Hudson River School paintings by Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, John Kensett, and Albert Bierstadt to later Impressionist canvases by John Twachtman and Willard Metcalf. Walton had acquired several of the paintings in this group before she decided to build a museum. If it's not quite a textbook survey, it is the foundation for an inclusive overview of 18th- and 19th-century American painting.

In an interview with Walton appended to the museum's catalogue, Wilmerding volunteers his opinion that "in a way" the acquisition of *Kindred Spirits* "was the first, transformative foundation of the museum coming into its own, taking on an identity nationally." This statement may raise the eyebrows of New Yorkers who were dismayed by the loss of *Kindred Spirits* and aware of the many hats Wilmerding wore at the time of the \$35 million closed-bid sale. Wilmerding was an adviser to both the library and Walton, as well as a visiting curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a trustee of the National Gallery, two museums that jointly offered a reported \$25 million to keep the painting in the area. The following year, Walton and the National Gallery made a \$68 million collaborative bid to acquire Thomas Eakins's *The Gross Clinic* from Thomas Jefferson



**Richard Caton Woodville's *War News from Mexico*, 1848, was recently acquired from the National Academy Museum in New York.**

University in Philadelphia, but a consortium of local museums rallied the citizenry to match the offer and keep the painting in Philadelphia.

The "national identity" Walton began to take on after acquiring *Kindred Spirits* was not, in fact, that of a developer creating a transformative museum but that of a poacher preying on cash-strapped institutions by offering record prices for locally significant treasures. Comparisons with Walmart's business practices were inevitable: critic Kriston Capps, for example, wrote in the *Guardian* that "Walton collects art with the same disregard for fair practices and competition that Wal-Mart shows in the retail sector." Even the *Arkansas Times*, a supporter of the Walton fam-

ily, conceded that "to build a great collection of American art, little of which is in private hands, Walton must look to public institutions and purchases are bound to cause hard feelings."

Walton has declined interviews in connection with the museum's debut, but in the past she has responded to these criticisms by stressing her willingness to collaborate with other institutions. As she told the *New York Times* last spring, "We want to share; we want to borrow; we want to loan; we want to have really active partnerships with museums worldwide." At press time, Crystal Bridges was still entangled in a legal dispute over its support of Fisk University's plan to cash out its collection of early-20th-century art donated by Georgia O'Keeffe, but controversies over Walton's more recent purchases have scaled down to near zero.

**T**his shift synchronizes, coincidentally or not, with the hiring of Don Bacigalupi as director of Crystal Bridges in 2009 and Walton's newfound enthusiasm for modern and contemporary American art. Bacigalupi, a specialist in post-1945 American art and visual culture, came to Bentonville after a six-year tenure as director of the Toledo Museum in Ohio. "We try to be very circumspect with our acquisitions," he says. "Alice is very aware of the effect her buying may have on the art market." As Walton "has become more exposed to modern and contemporary art, her interests have expanded. She's become fascinated with an even broader story of American art, including the art of today."

The Crystal Bridges galleries are laid out in a chronological sequence. In the 18th- and 19th-century galleries,



**Stuart Davis, *Still Life with Flowers*, 1930. Davis is a Walton favorite.**

paintings are displayed on the walls of curved hallways. The setting offers the intimate viewing experience of a domestic interior when the number of visitors is small, but it's difficult to predict how some of these galleries will fare when they are filled with larger crowds, baby strollers, wheelchairs, and audio guides. The 20th-century modern and contemporary galleries are larger, more flexible rectangular spaces, and their contents will undoubtedly surprise visitors who expect the collection to concentrate on 19th-century icons.

Although these purchases did not make headlines, some of Walton's 20th-century acquisitions were well known to dealers and curators before the museum opened, including

Robert Henri's 1908 portrait of the actress Jessica Penn, George Bellows's *Excavation at Night* (1908), and John Sloan's *Bleecker Street, Saturday Night* (1918). Even insiders, however, may find an unexpected range of work in the inaugural show. The collection has strengths in work from the Stieglitz circle, for example, including a 1917 watercolor and later paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe and canvases by Arthur Dove, Charles Demuth, and Marsden Hartley. Hartley's 1940 *Madawaska—Arcadian Light—Heavy*, a portrait of a young boxer with glowing nipples, is especially arresting and well displayed. Crystal Bridges founding curator Chris Crosman's description of the painting is not coy about its homoerotic allure: the painting, he writes, "reveals Hart-



**Joan Mitchell, *Untitled*, 1952–53. Abstraction is well represented in the collection.**

ley's full-blown embrace of homosexual desires that up to this point had remained hidden in stylized imagery, encoded in mystical symbols, or subsumed in representations of nature's heaving rhythms." Alfred Maurer and Stuart Davis, special favorites of Walton, are also well represented in this survey.

The early-20th-century room wraps up with a 1936–37 Arshile Gorky still life, which could have been hung in the modern-and-contemporary gallery with an early ho-hum Pollock and a 1946 psuedo-Surrealist painting by David Smith. Again, several acquisitions here were well publicized in advance, including Warhol's portrait of Dolly Parton, Chuck Close's portraits of Bill Clinton, and Wayne Thiebaud's

eerie 1963 *Supine Woman*, depicting an apparently catatonic figure almost as flat as the floor.

Contrary to preopening predictions, the gallery displays many abstract paintings. Perhaps the most spectacular artwork in the room is the six-and-a-half-foot Joan Mitchell gesture painting from 1952–53. Other abstract compositions include canvases by Hans Hofmann, Josef Albers, Grace Hartigan, Adolph Gottlieb, Theodoros Stamos, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland. The collection is not just a big-name checklist, however: also on view are paintings by self-taught artist Janet Sobel, whose claim to fame is three sentences about her 1945 pre-Pollock "drip" compositions written by the critic Clement Greenberg.



**Kerry James Marshall, *Our Town*, 1995, from the inaugural show.**

Among the opening events are temporary exhibitions drawn from the collection. The most ambitious is "Wonder World," a survey of approaches to "realism" by contemporary artists. Assembled by curatorial director David Houston, formerly chief curator at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans, the show is both witty and routine—Dan Flavin versus photorealist Richard Estes. This exhibition subverts conventional wisdom about the museum's collection with several artworks, including a John Baldessari sound sculpture, Nam June Paik's multimedia portrait of John Cage, an inlaid wood installation by Alison Elizabeth Taylor, Roxy Paine's steel-and-plastic *Bad Lawn*, Al Souza's fantastic jigsaw-puzzle collage, and holograms by James Turrell, who was also commissioned to create one of his "skyspaces" for the museum.

So how were decisions about these acquisitions made? Has Walton replaced Wilmerding as her primary adviser? According to Bacigalupi, "Our acquisition process is akin to most art museums. I, as director, vet all curatorial proposals before presenting them to the board's art committee, which deliberates and ultimately must approve any potential acquisition. Alice Walton serves as board chair and serves on the art committee." Wilmerding is also on the board and a member of the art committee.

As the range of work on view at the opening suggests, curatorial taste and ambition now play an ascending role in shaping the Crystal Bridges collection. Bacigalupi and Houston plan to build up the Abstract Expressionist holdings and are on the alert for a major Pollock painting; Houston also noted his interest in sculptors Martin Puryear and Donald Judd. Kevin Murphy, a specialist in 19th-century American art and a former curator at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, would like to acquire paintings by Whistler, George Caleb Bingham, and such late-19th-century academic artists as Kenyon Cox.

All the curators are young enough to have grown up professionally with a concern for inclusiveness and diversity. A focus on representations of strong women and women artists, for example, is a major subtheme of the Crystal Bridges collection. Several African American artists are represented in the inaugural show, beginning chronologically with Robert Scott Duncanson (1821–72), said to be the first internationally successful African American landscape painter, and ending with recent work by Kerry James Marshall and Kara Walker. There are many images of Native Americans by artists such as Karl Bodmer, George Catlin, and Edward Curtis, but only one Native American artist, Leon Polk Smith, is included in the collection. This statistic seems especially poignant: Ben-



**Kara Walker, *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863*, 2008. A focus on women artists is a collection subtheme.**

tonville was the western terminus of the Cherokee Trail of Tears.

The museum's basic mission is to "tell the unfolding history of the United States through the lens of its visual arts." To accomplish this politically delicate goal, the education program will highlight innovation. As the collection catalogue states, the "artist's left-brain thinking belongs to the same tradition of invention that yielded the cotton gin, the telegraph, air travel and the internet. Sam Walton's hometown makes perfect sense for a museum devoted to American art and its create-something-from-nothing spirit." The museum's opening exhibition, "Celebrating the American Spirit," is sponsored by General Electric, Coca-Cola, and Goldman Sachs—"iconic companies," according to the museum's public-relations team, that embody the same "spirit" as the collection.

To sympathizers of Occupy Wall Street, this embrace of corporate behemoths may cement the museum's reputation as a false front for Walmart. But acknowledging diversity is not only good practice in collecting; it's also a prerequisite for productive engagement with American regional cultures. As Bacigalupi says, in collecting and programming for the museum "we must remember first of all where we are." Most citizens in the right-to-work state of Arkansas revere Walmart as an economic engine and major employer purveying merchandise many could not otherwise afford. Crystal Bridges will make it possible for a siz-

able underserved population to experience important works of art for free. Attracting new audiences to art museums by relating artistic creation to other genres of innovative and imaginative thinking has proven to be an effective outreach strategy.

The museum's educational agenda is broad and ambitious. Collaborations with the University of Arkansas in nearby Fayetteville are in the works, including future programs in conjunction with Leo Mazow, the university's new associate professor of American art. The museum is building a library and an archive (50,000 volumes on opening day), and plans to announce a fellowship program for visiting scholars. Alice Walton has a track record for supporting art education for children: the precedent she set at Crystal Bridges inspired the local Walker Foundation to contribute a \$10 million endowment to provide funding to local schools to cover costs for visits to the museum and learning sessions for students and teachers in the museum's high-tech interactive education studio.

Crystal Bridges undoubtedly will "take on an identity nationally," but it will begin by sinking roots in northwest Arkansas. As Walton has observed, "A lot of people don't really know this part of the world, really don't know the people here and their desire and need for art." But when they "come and see what's here and what we've done," she adds, "I think their attitudes might change."

# Seeing Still for the First Time



The museum at dusk.

The new museum dedicated to **Clyfford Still** in Denver presents an unprecedented sweep of his work—even as its staff continues to make more discoveries **BY PATRICIA FAILING**

LIMBING THE STAIRS LEADING TO THE first gallery in the Clyfford Still Museum, visitors immediately confront the artist's imperious gaze. The staging is obvious and powerful. Still's 1940 self-portrait, hung at the top of the staircase, issues a silent command to each visitor: "When I expose a painting," Still proclaimed, "I would have it say 'here I am: this is my presence, my feeling, myself.' . . . If one does not like it, he should turn away, because I am looking at him."

Still is fully present as an artist for the first time in this Denver museum, which opened its doors in November. The artist conceived of his paintings as diary entries that, taken together, would form a unity and perhaps a synthesis. Although he vigorously rejected what he called the "sinister museum-gallery game," he did sell or donate approximately 150 paintings during his lifetime. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo own substantial collections of Still's work. When he died at age 75 in 1980, however, 94 percent of his production remained in his home, including 825 paintings, 1,575 works on paper, and three sculptures.

Still's will decreed that his legacy be donated to an American city that would "establish permanent headquarters exclusively for these works of art and assure their physical survival with the explicit requirement that none be sold, given or exchanged." The artworks, furthermore, must be retained at this site "in perpetuity for exhibition and study."

Still's wife, Patricia, was named his executor; after years of indecision, in 2004, she accepted an offer from the city of Denver to build the Still museum. In the years between the artist's death and the Denver accord, Still's ranking among the canonical Abstract Expressionists remained secure, but few exhibitions of his work were held. He became a legendary ghost, whose unknown achievement haunted two generations of art historians.

The Denver deal was sealed with a complex agreement, requiring the city to complete the project within ten years. The then Denver mayor John Hickenlooper (now Colorado governor) sold the agreement to the Denver city council with a promise that the museum would be built and maintained exclusively with private funding. In 2006, property was acquired next to the Denver Art Museum, and Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture was selected to design the museum.

The agreement with the estate was signed without detailed information about the condition of the paintings. Still rolled as many as 13 unstretched canvases at a time on cardboard tubes or metal pipes, which were stored in his home in New Windsor, Maryland. They remained in the house until 2003, when Patricia shipped them to a nearby warehouse. Conservators prepared an initial review but did not unroll most of the canvases. Happily for the museum, most of the paintings turned out to be in good condition.

"The biggest problem is planar deformation," says Still Museum director Dean Sobel. "Basically, this means the canvases need to rest for a time on a flat surface, after being rolled up for so many years. Rolling was actually a



Still's 1940 self-portrait.

plus in many ways. Not much oxygen or light reached the surfaces of the paintings, and they weren't disturbed after they were stored."

**The museum's opening exhibition**, curated by British scholar David Anfam, includes more than 100 paintings and works on paper, a small percentage of what may be the largest intact collection of work by a modern artist in the world. Although Anfam and Sobel have

studied photographs of all the work, they have yet to see every painting in the bequest. "It would take the floor space of a small airplane hangar to lay out all the 14-foot or 15-foot paintings remaining on the rolls," Sobel says. "And once they are unrolled, we don't want to risk any damage by rolling them up again. It's frustrating, but it will be some time before we really know what we have."

Also on view are documents and souvenirs from Still's archives, which were still being unpacked days before the

opening. "There are unknowns here too," Sobel adds. "We've opened books from his library, for example, and found small drawings inside."

The exhibition is installed chronologically in nine galleries occupying 10,000 square feet on the museum's second floor. Ceiling heights vary from 12 feet in the gallery for early works to 16 feet in the room for the huge canvases (up to 15 feet long) of the '70s. The space was designed to preserve specific relationships between viewer and artwork. In the first gallery, where Still's early, easel-size paintings are hung, ceilings are lower, replicating the environments in which the paintings would have first been shown. When Still exhibited his large-scale compositions in the late '40s and early '50s, he typically positioned them on a wall to capture the viewer's entire field of vision. The museum's largest gallery, therefore, is a modestly scaled 1,200-square-foot room, where viewers can experience the engulfing effect of Still's panoramic later abstractions.

This nuanced rapport between paintings and architecture plays out in the entire \$29 million, 28,500-square-foot museum. Cloepfil envisioned the building as "something of the

earth . . . a nearly geologic experience." The exterior is a low, two-story rectangle with a strongly textured cast-concrete facade. Its unique surface was created by pressing long wooden boards at three- or four-inch intervals into wet concrete and allowing the viscous cement to ooze between the timbers, forming fractured vertical lines. The effect resembles stone ruffles that flicker with shadows and turn silver in sunlight.

Thirty-two sycamore trees were planted in the building's forecourt to create a shaded canopy in front of the entry hall, where "something of the earth" is expressed with cement walls and small pebbles pressed into the terrazzo flooring. The walls are variously textured throughout the building to diffuse the natural light filtered through an elaborate cast-concrete ceiling, which evens out the lighting in the galleries. Designing a museum for just one man had "an excruciatingly specific quality to it," Cloepfil observes. "Inside and out, it's almost one construct. . . . You enter one body that holds Clyfford Still's work."

The primary goal of the opening exhibition is to illustrate how the pictorial logic in Still's early figurative work evolved



PH-76, 1935.

into the Abstract Expressionist canvases he described as "not paintings in the usual sense. They are life and death merged into a fearful union."

The curatorial argument is by no means obvious at the beginning of the show. After a period of study at the Art Students League in New York in 1925, Still moved to Spokane, Washington, and began creating regionalist-style American Scene paintings. From 1933 to 1941, he taught painting at what was then Washington State College in Pullman, where he also completed an M.A. thesis on Cézanne.

His canvases of the early and mid-'30s represent figures with emaciated (male) or swollen (female) anatomy, huge hands, and masklike faces. Some compositions make oblique references to Christian pietas and Nativity scenes or to Adam and Eve with the apple, although the characters are usually costumed as contemporary farmers or rural workers. Farm machinery or pitchforks function as anatomical surrogates linking hands and arm bones with the earth. The forces of gravity, in turn, pull the human forms into organic abstractions with elongated and drooping flesh.

These mid-'30s paintings may represent Still's initial and literal ideas about integrating "figure" and "ground." As the decade progresses, anatomical, tool, and landscape forms begin to separate and recombine like jigsaw puzzles. Still's drawings, never on view before, suggest the dawning of new strategies by 1941. At this point he begins to reverse positive and negative spaces and define figural shapes with the ground. He also leaves behind discrete contours in favor of more fluid compositions in which figures and environments interpenetrate.

"By 1941, space and the figure in my canvases had been resolved into a total psychic entity," Still recalled, "freeing me from the limitations of each, yet fusing into an instrument bounded only by the limits of my energy and intuition. My feeling of freedom was now absolute and infinitely exhilarating."

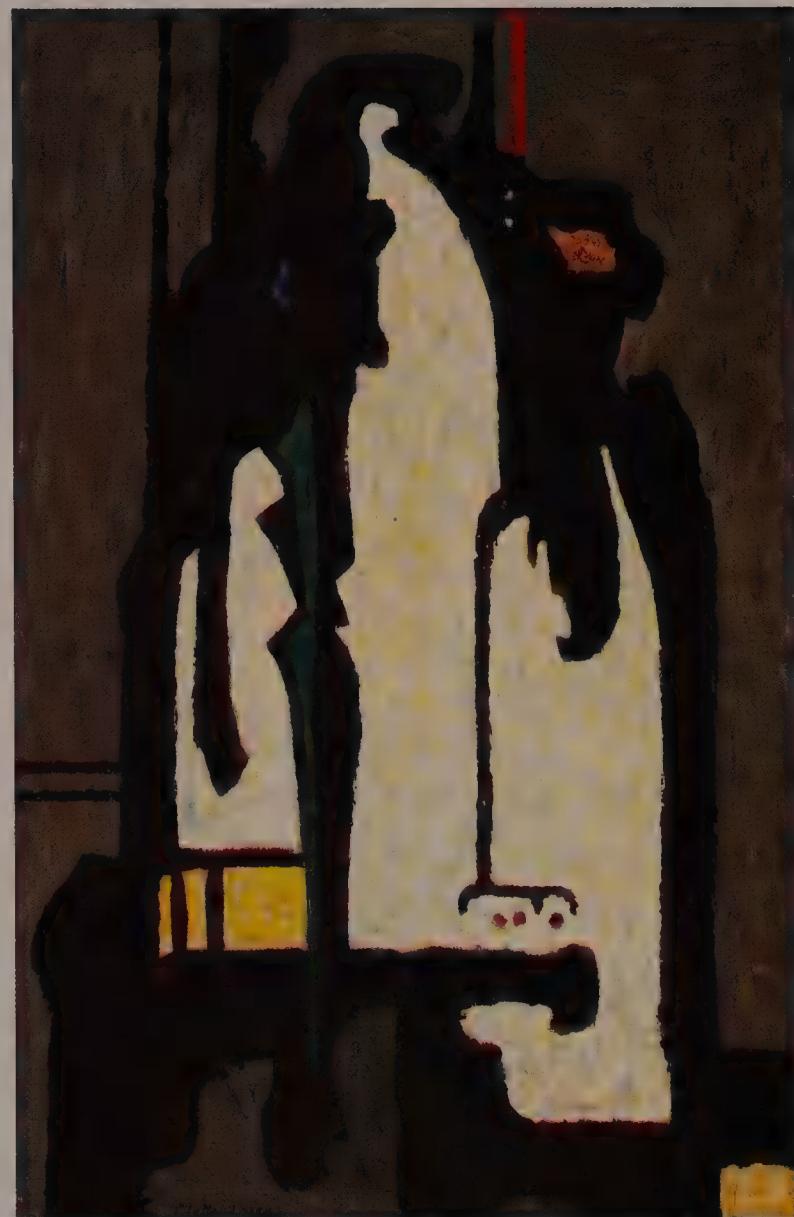
Still's writings suggest that this exhilaration was prompted by initial success in his fierce campaign to escape from art history. While his figures from the '30s owe a debt to José Clemente Orozco, and his early abstractions to Miró and other Surrealists, these references are subtle and inconclusive. "Still was essentially an autodidact," Anfam says, "so it's an enormous challenge to retrace his influences and his development. What his early work shows us, I think, is an evolving conception of a living presence in concrete things, and vice versa: what is human tends to get petrified, while rocks and sky become living entities. Eventually they fuse into a unique idea, something in the mind's eye, a kind of Platonic thought that Still began to materialize with pigment on canvas."

By 1943-44, Still's interpenetrating grounds and figures had escaped gravity and evolved into soaring vertical abstractions realized with a palette knife. Although he favored ensembles of dark earth tones in the '40s, the post-'30s galleries display examples in which his black, brown, and tan flames of color blow through expansive white fields like whiffs of smoke driven by the wind. Still proclaimed his ambition to "disembarrass color from all conventional associations, that is, from the pleasant, luminous, or symbolic," yet he indulged his viewers with a gor-

geous field of gold on gold, opening up to patches of soft lavender and green.

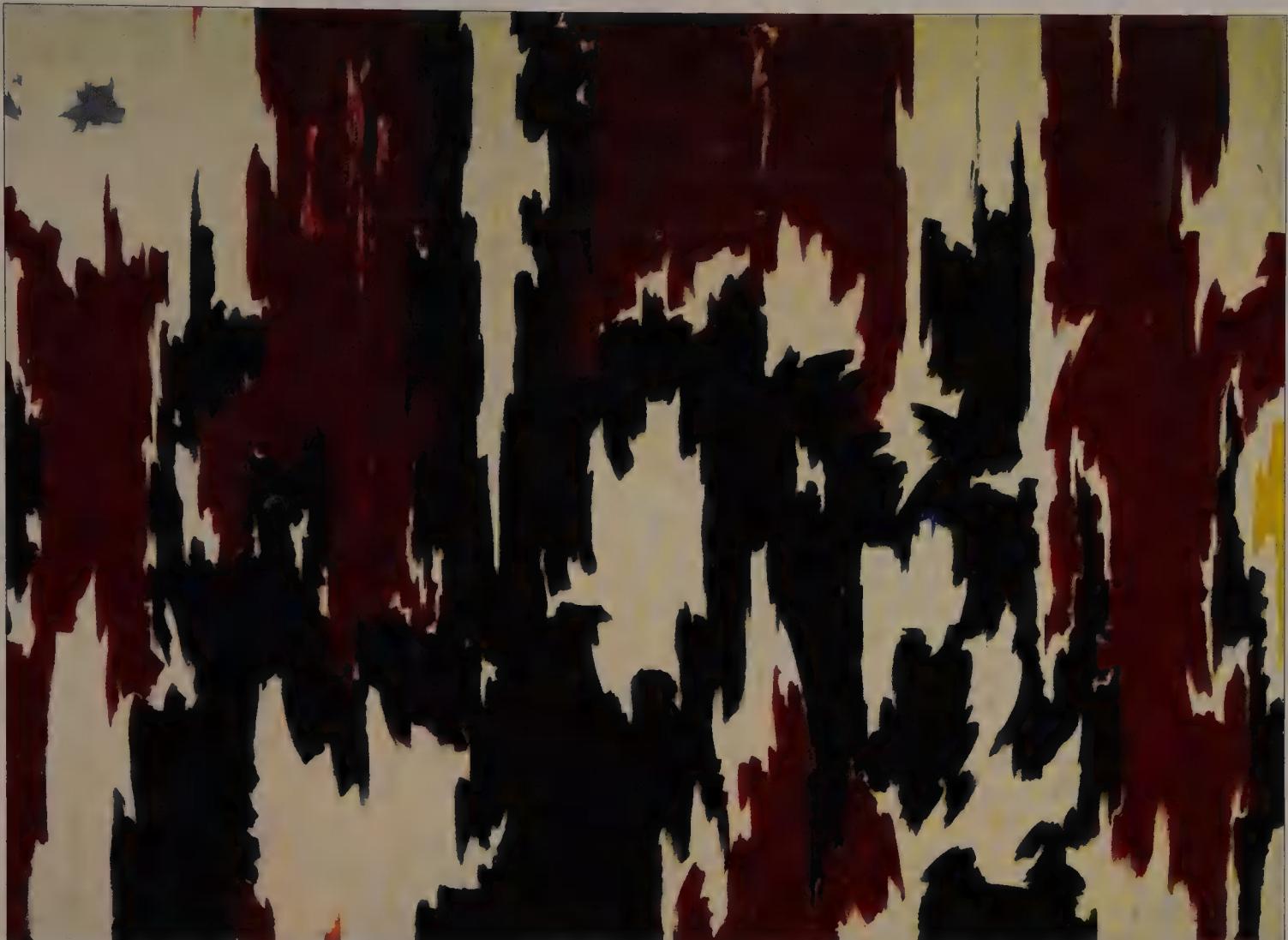
All paintings on view from the later '40s and '50s are the work of an exuberant virtuoso who found innovative means to integrate contrasting colors into a cohesive spatial plane and created deep and subtle chromatic effects with texture and by painting over and scraping away areas of pigment. The latest paintings in the galleries, from the '70s, are somewhat less satisfying. Even Anfam says, "A few are a bit operatic, a development that didn't serve him very well." The current display represents only an introduction to Still's private inventory, however, so definitive conclusions about stylistic development and relative accomplishment will need to be suspended until the museum has mounted several exhibitions.

**The museum will be able to fund**  
its future exhibitions with proceeds from a "regrettable," if not unethical, sale. Contrary to the letter and spirit of Still's bequest, four paintings destined for the museum were sold for a total of \$101.55 million at Sotheby's just before the museum opened; one of the four paintings



PH-313, 1942.





**PH-118, 1947 (opposite); 1957-J No. 2 (PH-401), 1957 (above); and PH-1023, 1976 (below).**



fetched \$61.6 million, almost three times the former record price for a Still canvas. The sale was sanctioned by a Maryland court, which ruled that Still's ban on sales, at least on a one-time basis, was "impracticable."

The museum also ducked the American Association of Museums' ethical guidelines prohibiting the use of funds from deaccessioning for purposes other than acquisitions. Since the city of Denver was the legal recipient of Still's collection and the museum had not formally accessioned the paintings, museum officials argued that the association's policies did not apply.

There was no argument about the museum's need for the money. Although \$30 million was raised for Cloepfil's building, with over 90 percent of the funds contributed by Colorado donors, resources to support the museum's projected \$2.5 million annual operating budget were negligible.

The plan devised for the sale was somewhat more nuanced than many of the museum's critics acknowledge. Still left his wife 100 paintings and 300 works on paper for her own collection. In 1991 she put up three of her paintings at auction. One of them, 1949-A-No.1, was unsold. This was the painting that sold for \$61.6 million last November. Patricia died in 2005, leaving her own collection to Denver, along with her husband's archives. Last year, Sobel and the museum's board (Anfam would not confirm his involvement) decided to create a small, four-canvas survey of Still's oeuvre pegged to the unsold painting, hoping that another museum might be enticed to acquire the entire lot. But a dispute between Sotheby's and Christie's over which house would sell the paintings left little time for museums to consider the matter, and Sotheby's offered a \$25 million baseline guarantee, enough to ensure support for future operations.

Even if the sale can be rationalized as the necessary means to a desirable end, Still's admirers can be rightly concerned about the prospect of future losses. Fund-raising for a one-artist museum, especially a museum focused almost exclusively on demanding abstract paintings, will obviously pose an ongoing challenge. The Maryland court, furthermore, has granted the city "other and further relief as the nature of its cause might require." Local art lovers and viewers with civic pride may be initially attracted to the new facility by media buzz, but will they come more than once?

Facing such headwinds, Sobel and Anfam offer different platforms for ensuring the museum's success. Still's uncompromising dedication to his work, in Sobel's view, is a compelling marketing tool. "Our focus groups were captivated by this man who believed so much in what he did and made so many sacrifices because he was convinced that art was too important for compromise. He's a much more attractive figure for local audiences than, say, Jackson Pollock," Sobel says.

The museum also envisions collaborations with the Denver Art Museum that will attract viewers by relating Still's work to that of his Abstract Expressionist peers. Anfam sees a much grander future for the museum. "What this collection demonstrates is that Still's astonishing creative achievements overturn the history of Abstract Expressionism as centered in New York—the map simply must be redrawn," he says.

"This place," he adds, "will make real for so many people all the dry superlatives Still has inspired over the years, including my own."



PAUL J. GARCIA/COURTESY CLOEFFORD STILL MUSEUM, DENVER



Installation view of the inaugural exhibition.  
Natural light enters the galleries through a series of skylights  
over a cast-in-place perforated convex ceiling.



Navarro's site-specific installation *Fence* enclosed an empty gallery space at the New York Armory Show, 2011. The artist (opposite) has a "very personal relationship with electricity."



The human-powered *Resistance*, 2009, pointed toward the glowing doorways of *Death Row*, 2006–2009, at the 2009 Venice Biennale. On the floor, *Bed*, 2009.

USING LIGHT, MIRRORS, AND NEON AND WITH A SENSIBILITY AT ONCE POLITICAL AND POETIC, **IVÁN NAVARRO** CREATES GLOWING GATEWAYS OF ENDLESS SPACE

# Man of Refraction



BY HILARIE M. SHEETS

**ELECTRIC LIGHT** is an essential element of a piece by Iván Navarro. He may use glowing fluorescent rods to construct iconic modernist chairs or—with the aid of mirrors—outline doorways leading into dark, seemingly infinite spaces. Drawn to the seductive possibilities of artificial light as a medium, the 39-year-old Chilean-born artist has a very personal relationship with electricity that infuses all his work with a layer of social commentary.

Growing up in Santiago under the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, Navarro was accustomed to the power being cut off in the evening by the government to keep people in their homes and enforce curfews. "You needed a flashlight to get to the radio, which was like an altar in

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*Hilarie M. Sheets is a contributing editor of ARTnews.*

the house, to hear the news," he says. "All the pieces that I've made make reference to controlling activity, and electricity was a way to control people."

"While many artists use light as a primary medium, Iván has managed to create a particular visual language with light that consistently refers to previous histories, both art and political histories, and combines his experiences as a Chilean with those of his life in the United States," says Anne Ellegood, senior curator at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. Formerly a curator for the California collector Peter Norton, Ellegood first became interested in Navarro's work when Norton acquired his 2005 *Electric Chair*. This re-creation in radiant colored neon of Gerrit Rietveld's famous *Red Blue Chair* injected a commentary on capital punishment into the history of design; it could deliver dangerous voltage or shatter if someone tries to sit in it. "He has taken up specific pieces by artists like Dan Flavin, Tony Smith, Ellsworth Kelly and added a psychological spin to their formal inquiries, translating everyday objects like chairs, ladders, fences into fragile and haunting objects," Ellegood says.

She also acquired Navarro's 2006 video/sculpture piece *Flashlight: I'm not from here, I'm not from there* for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., when she worked there as an associate curator, and included it in the 2007 show "Refract, Reflect, Project: Light Works from the Collection." Navarro built a wheelbarrow from fluorescent tubing, which in the video is being pushed by a displaced person walking along desolate train tracks and accompanied by a Julio Iglesias song about a resourceful drifter (the artist frequently finds inspiration in music). Periodically, the character steals gasoline from a car to fill the electric generator that powers his wheelbarrow, or he changes the color of his fluorescent lighting by switching filters.

"It's the idea of his identity constantly changing as he's pushing his life around," says Navarro, underscoring the importance of an external power source in this and other video/sculpture works. "He doesn't have a fixed place to live and he's trying to go back to his mother town, but no one recognizes him."

**NAVARRO LEFT** his homeland in 1997 and now lives in Brooklyn, where he has many projects in production in the workshop adjacent to his studio. Speaking in accented but highly articulate English, he is hardly the image of a homeless immigrant laborer, yet *Flashlight* carries echoes of his own difficult path. Until Pinochet lost the Chilean presidential election in 1988, Navarro knew no other reality than a culture of repression and fear.

Navarro was born just nine months before the military coup d'état on September 11, 1973, that took over all mechanisms of power, including the Universidad Técnica del Estado in Santiago, where his father directed an art program. He was preparing an exhibition protesting fascism on the day of the takeover but was able to hide within the university and escape. Most others there were taken and tortured or killed. Weeks later he returned in a foolhardy attempt to retrieve his paycheck and was appre-

hended and imprisoned for six months. After his release, he worked in advertising.

"It was easy for people to come to your house and take you," says Navarro, who never traveled outside Chile during his youth. "It made my family very overprotective—of me, of the whole situation."

Navarro came of age as democracy was returning to his country. Good at carpentry, he originally intended to study set design. But at the Catholic University of Santiago, from 1991 to 1995, he was a student of Eugenio Dittborn, who was a generation older and had participated in the international art world under the radar of the dictatorship. He invented "airmail paintings," collages made of cheap materials that could be folded, packed in special envelopes, and sent out of the country. In Dittborn's circle Navarro found a community.

His earliest pieces using electricity were handmade lamps that played with the stereotype of Chilean art as necessarily craft based. He showed them in hotel lobbies and friends' houses because the dictatorship had done away with public art spaces. In 1996, he made *The Great Lamp*, an installation in a new gallery space, where he "drew" on the walls with electric cords punctuated with lightbulbs that viewers could turn on and off to change the pattern of light.

It was his first artwork to seriously address "the history of electricity as a tool of torture during the dictatorship," says Navarro. "In this case, it was a totally democratic approach to the use of power. It was important that you could leave it off totally if you wanted."

In 1997, a friend who had moved to New York invited him to visit. Navarro intended to stay only briefly, but he found a job at a studio restoring furniture and acquired a visa by enrolling in a language school in Times Square. "I tried to stay like any young immigrant," he says. For three years, he worked during the day and went to classes in the evening to fulfill the 90 percent attendance requirement.

**FOR NAVARRO,** language became another material to work with. He got into the habit of reading the dictionary and making lists of words in a notebook. As he flips through the book, pointing at a list of words that are both verbs and nouns, he says, "I like words that have two sides, one very ambiguous and one very objective." He often punctuates his sculptures with a single neon word, adding another layer of meaning to the work. "It's interesting to get better in the language and try to understand the poetic side of a word," he says. "Sometimes you get completely lost in the word you're using."

In 2003 Navarro made a discovery that led to the defining development in his work. In Chinatown he saw a star-shaped mirrored lamp hanging on a wall and making the wall surface seem to recede endlessly when he looked into it. He went back to his studio and started experimenting with mirrors, including one-way mirrors of the kind used in interrogation rooms and in skyscrapers with reflective facades that let people see out but not in. He found that the simple interaction of a normal mirror facing the reflective side of a one-way mirror, with a light sandwiched in



*White Electric Chair*, 2005, would be dangerous to sit on. A re-creation of Gerrit Rietveld's famous *Red Blue Chair*, it injects a commentary on capital punishment into the history of design.

between, created an infinite projection. "It's very mysterious and you don't see a reflection of yourself," says Navarro, stressing that it doesn't work without the light. "It's a trick."

The use of mirrors opened a realm of metaphoric spaces for Navarro. In 2006, he made a wall of 13 one-way mirrored doorways limned in neon and matched to the rainbow colors of Ellsworth Kelly's flat serial canvases, *Spectrum 5*. Titled *Death Row*, Navarro's mirrored wall lures viewers to these glowing gateways of endless space with their suggestion of an ominous fate (and a touch of science fiction and nightclub glamour thrown in).

That same year, Navarro built *Die Again (Monument for Tony Smith)*, a 12-foot, black-painted plywood cube referring to Smith's 1962 Minimalist steel piece *Die*. In Navarro's version, viewers can actually enter the cube, where they will find themselves in a chamber with five triangles of white neon embedded in a star formation in the floor, which seems to descend interminably, while they listen to the Beatles singing the wistful "Nowhere Man."

"Minimalism was the American art of the moment in the 1960s and '70s," Navarro says, "but in South America formalism wasn't part of the avant-garde. Everything was full of social content. In a way, it was very easy for me to take on this Minimal reference and put in all the social content that was missing."

While he uses the work of other artists as departure points, the figure whose influence he points to as seminal for him is Gordon Matta-Clark. "When I planned all those pieces, my intellectual interest was to open up spaces in the architecture, and I was thinking about the cuts Matta-Clark made in actual buildings," Navarro says. He is also interested in how Matta-Clark, an American, went to Santiago in 1971 in search of his long-absent Chilean father, artist Roberto Matta. His father's friend, the director of the Museo de Bellas Artes, told him Matta was in Paris but suggested he do a project at the museum. Matta-Clark created a now-legendary piece (unfortunately, undocumented) using mirrors that connected the dome of the museum with the bathroom in the basement. "Matta-Clark is a real inspiration in every sense," says Navarro.

Navarro's interest in words as objects and metaphors is reflected in another group of sculptures, based on the form of a pedestal. Instead of the usual cubic or cylindrical plinth supporting a sculpture, in these works the sculpture is inverted, with words such as "ECHO," "DIE," "HIDE," and "BED" spelled out in neon and replicated through mirrors into their depths. Navarro points out that every letter in these words is vertically symmetrical; in the sculpture, only the top half of the letter is actual neon tubing while the bottom half is reflection. "The duality is literal," says Navarro. "One half is real and the other half is illusion. The word is only completed in its representation."

**NAVARRO WAS** surprised to be asked to represent Chile at the 2009 Venice Biennale, having left his country more than a decade earlier. "I said I'll do it, but I'm not going to say Chile is the most beautiful country in South

America," he recalls. He included the pedestal piece *Bed*, suggestive of domestic comfort in name but antithetical to what a bed is physically, and a video/sculpture piece entitled *Resistance*, a stationary bicycle that viewers could pedal, generating electricity to power a chair made of fluorescent tubes attached behind the bicycle, similar to a pedicab.

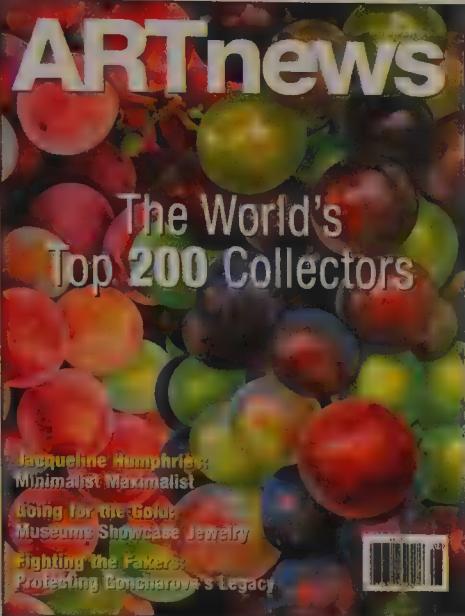
The accompanying video shows a cyclist toting an empty glowing chair through the streets of New York. In Venice, the bicycle was pointed toward the wall of doors in *Death Row*. "The idea was you were pedaling in front of the doors but you weren't moving anywhere because the bike was stationary and the doors were just an illusion," says Navarro, of his artistic statement about a nation he felt had lost its identity.

"Venice was his first important public breakthrough as an artist," says curator Dan Cameron, who first met Navarro in Santiago in 1994, when Cameron was working with Dittborn on a show for the New Museum in New York. Navarro was the only student Dittborn insisted he see. "There is something I find profoundly Chilean in Iván's work," says Cameron. "It has a kind of humility that looks outward and tries to find connections with a larger world that has to do not just with Chile's political history in the last 50 years. Chile's one of the most geographically isolated countries in the world, and life at the periphery is something that's understood as part of the fabric of life. I think that kind of distance and farawayness is there in Iván's work."

Cameron included Navarro in Prospect.2, the latest iteration of the New Orleans biennial he founded, which is currently on view (through January 29). Navarro installed a seven-foot-high white neon fence enclosing the empty interior space of a gallery in the St. Claude Art District. "It's a way to control the circulation; it's sort of like a prison," says Navarro. "It's a way of inviting people to appreciate the piece from the outside."

Navarro also inverted the way people typically look at skyscrapers in his show earlier this year at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York, where his editioned sculptures begin at \$40,000 and his large-scale installations are priced up to \$400,000. There he showed wall pieces featuring the floor plans of Modernist towers outlined in neon and with seemingly endless space tunneling backward. It was as though viewers were positioned at the top of a building peering down into its dark bowels rather than standing outside looking up. Brancusi's *Endless Column* was his departure point, and he was drawn to certain buildings—the Flatiron and Empire State Building in New York, Lake Point Tower and Sears Tower in Chicago, and the Jumeirah Emirates Towers in Dubai—for their abstract shapes, some evoking organic forms used by Miró or Arp. He punctuated many of the works with single words in the center of the space—"burden," "decay," "desert," "shelter"—suggesting the opposite of the utopian optimism typically embodied in such buildings.

"The height of these supermodern buildings represents some kind of power—economic power or political power," says Navarro. "They're symbols. But when you rework a symbol, it becomes an abstraction. It's about the movement between reality and illusion."



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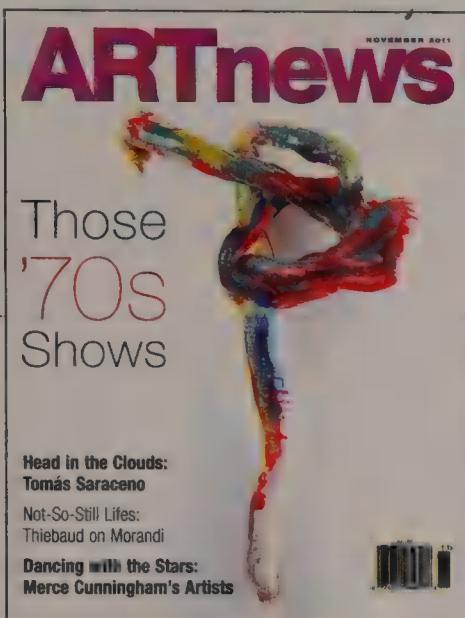
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Installation view of  
"Heaven or Las Vegas"  
at Paul Kasmin Gallery,  
2011. On the wall:  
*Shelter (The Center)*  
and *Abandon (Agbar)*;  
on the floor, *Untitled*  
(Twin Towers), all 2011.



BED  
BED  
BED  
BED

Another view of *Bed*,  
2009. Looking down, the  
viewer sees the word  
spelled out in neon and  
replicated through  
mirrors into the illusory  
depths of the piece.



**Alex Podesta's mixed-media sculpture *City Watch*, 2008, installed on a rooftop.**

**It was commissioned by the "Art in Public Places" project administered by the Arts Council of New Orleans and funded by the Joan Mitchell Foundation.**



**Robert Mapplethorpe's portrait of Roy Cohn, 1981, from the National Portrait Gallery's "Hide/Seek" exhibition. The Mapplethorpe Foundation supported the show, but after David Wojnarowicz's video was removed, it refused to let the gallery use its images on promotions.**

# The Artist as Philanthropist

At a time when government and corporate support is decreasing, artists' foundations are becoming increasingly influential

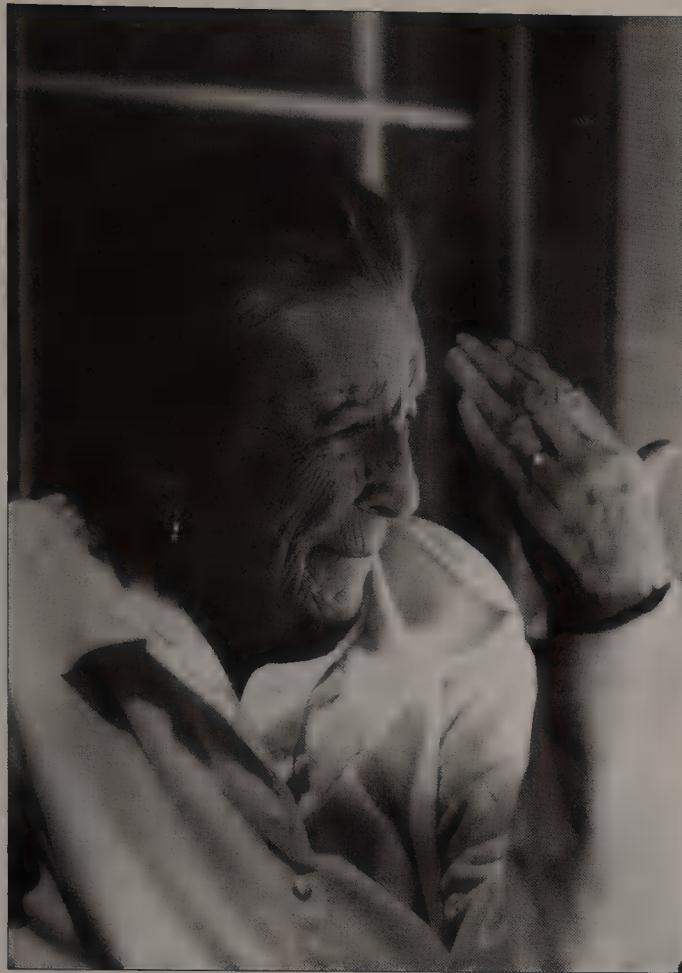
BY EILEEN KINSELLA

**In the wake** of the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina, in August 2005, representatives of the New York-based Joan Mitchell Foundation reached out to the arts community in New Orleans in an effort to help. After corresponding with individual artists and arts-organization leaders, says Carolyn Somers, the foundation's executive director, "we realized that returning to the studio and finding a way to continue to make work following the flooding of the city" was a major challenge for New Orleans artists.

In September 2005, the foundation made its first emergency grants to artists who were adversely affected by Hurricane Katrina, and in the years since, it has provided more than \$3 million in support to both individual artists and arts organizations in New Orleans. By 2007, the foundation had concluded that the city's infrastructure for supporting artists, even before the disaster, was "fragile" at best.

In the summer of 2010 the foundation made its first real-estate acquisition in New Orleans: a bed-and-breakfast in

*Eileen Kinsella is editor of the ARTnewsletter.*



**The sculptor Louise Bourgeois set up her own foundation, the Easton Foundation, before her death in 2010. Artists' foundations are becoming a powerful force in the world of cultural philanthropy.**



**Herb Ritts, Cindy Crawford, Ferre 3, Malibu, 1993, from a recent gift to the J. Paul Getty Museum. The aims of the Herb Ritts Foundation are to advance photography as an art form and support AIDS-related causes.**

foreclosure on an acre and a half of land near the city center that was once part of a Creole plantation. It is now being transformed into an artists' community.

The Joan Mitchell Foundation was established in 1993, a year after the artist's death in Paris, and was formed with her stated goal of aiding painters and sculptors. The foundation also provides free art-education classes in New York City and, through a nomination process, awards grants to painters and sculptors as well as graduating M.F.A. students.

It is one of a small but growing number of artist-endowed foundations that are becoming a powerful force in the world of cultural philanthropy. In addition to overseeing individual artists' legacies by documenting and protecting their work, such foundations, through hands-on involvement with other artists and organizations, are discovering the best and most efficient ways to provide much-needed support at a time when traditional funding sources are shrinking.

"Most government officials think the arts are dispensable," says Joel Wachs, president of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the largest artist-endowed foundation, which currently has about \$330 million in assets. The foundation announced \$14 million in cash grants to arts organizations for the fiscal year ending April 2012. Funding provided by artists is the "purest and best way to support the arts," says Wachs.

In late 2010, the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., bowed to pressure from critics and removed David Wojnarowicz's video *A Fire in My Belly*, which includes a segment showing ants crawling over a crucifix, from its group exhibition "Hide/Seek." The Warhol Foundation, a lead supporter of the show, publicly condemned the move and said it would cease funding for all future Smithsonian shows if the work was not reinstated. In a letter to secretary G. Wayne Clough, Wachs wrote that the museum's "blatant censorship" was "unconscionable."

Since the work was not reinstated, the Warhol Foundation's position remains that it will not fund any further exhibitions at Smithsonian museums, Wachs confirmed. The foundation made a \$150,000 grant to bring the "Hide/Seek" show to both the Brooklyn Museum and the Tacoma Art Museum in Washington state.

The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, headed by Michael Ward Stout, also condemned the museum's action, although it did not take the additional step of cutting off funding to the institution.

The purpose of the Mapplethorpe Foundation, established by the artist in 1988, a few months before his death at the age of 42, is to protect the artist's work and advance his creative vision. It also has a second mandate: to support medical research in the area of AIDS and HIV infection. To date, the foundation has directed \$5 million to this goal.

Over the last several decades, the number of artists whose careers thrived during their lifetimes has grown exponentially, a shift that has allowed them more time, resources, and flexibility to plan ahead. As the market for modern and contemporary art keeps expanding, experts say, the number of foundations established by such financially successful artists will continue to multiply.

The first-ever comprehensive survey of this field was released late last year by the Aspen Institute's Program on Philanthropy and Social Innovation. The massive two-volume



**Harry Shunk photographed Yves Klein's actions, including the making of *Anthropométries de l'époque bleue*, in Paris in 1960. The Roy Lichtenstein Foundation spearheaded a project to preserve Shunk's archive.**

study, *The Artist as Philanthropist: Strengthening the Next Generation of Artist-Endowed Foundations*, led by Christine Vincent, a former deputy director of the Ford Foundation, was supported by a consortium of donors, including many of the leading artist-endowed foundations, such as the Warhol Foundation, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation.

The study identified 300 artist-endowed foundations holding a total of \$2.5 billion in assets, of which more than \$1 billion was in art assets. Between 1990 and 2005, the number of these foundations nearly doubled, with charitable-purpose

payments totaling \$954 million. Of that sum, \$639 million was paid out in grants, while \$315 million went toward administrative costs, such as funding exhibition programs and study centers.

A key purpose of the study is to provide guidance to artists, heirs, and experts who are considering setting up such entities. "Its aim is to fill a significant information gap facing individuals involved in creating and leading new artist-endowed foundations," according to Vincent. Many of these foundations do not become active until after the death of the artist or his or her heirs. The study found that the current average age of artists planning their own foundations rose to 74 years in 2005, from 64 years in the mid-1980s.

In a dialogue with Vincent that was included in the Aspen Institute study, Yale University School of Art dean Robert Storr pointed out: "Even now, as you look at the list of artists who have privately endowed foundations, virtually none of the art stars of the 1970s and 1980s appear. They may show up later but most of the existing foundations have to do with the generations of artists active in the 1950s or 1960s."

Many foundations that are set up during the artist's lifetime are "on the shelf" entities, meaning that they make only one or two modest grants per year, says Vincent. (Artists and foundation heads must abide by strict rules that prohibit "self-dealing" or situations in which handling or selling or appearing to promote an artist or the work could present a conflict of interest.)

Among recently deceased artists who set up foundations are Louise Bourgeois (the Easton Foundation) and Cy Twombly. Living artists who have set up foundations and are already making substantial gifts of money and artwork include painters Alex Katz, Ellsworth Kelly, LeRoy Neiman, and Helen Frankenthaler.

The Los Angeles-based Herb Ritts Foundation was "the result of a very short conversation" in 1996 in the broader context of estate planning, says director Mark McKenna. It essentially became active after the artist's death in 2002, McKenna says, and is aimed at advancing photography as an art form and supporting AIDS-related causes.

**Foundations sometimes** assume the responsibility of authenticating an artist's work. However, as the market has continued to rise, the stakes have gotten much higher. In October, the Warhol Foundation announced it would cease authenticating works and dissolve its authentication board after having spent millions in legal fees to defend against authentication disputes. The Dedalus Foundation, which supports the oeuvre of artist Robert Motherwell, has also been at the center of a recent high-profile authenticity-related legal dispute.

Motherwell, after making provision for his wife and daughters, left a substantial number of artworks, the copyrights to all of his works in all mediums (including his writings, both published and unpublished), and all of his professional papers, notebooks, and archives to the Dedalus Foundation. The foundation, which is working on a catalogue raisonné, scheduled for publication this year, assists with museum exhibitions and loans of Motherwell's works. It also awards grants to graduating M.F.A. students.

Jack Flam, president of the foundation, says that in overseeing copyrights, image reproduction, and licensing, the question

often arises: "Is this what Bob would have wanted?" For instance, "if a movie producer wants permission to use a Motherwell artwork or image in a film, say, in a psychiatrist's office, you have to ask what the character is about. Is he a mad killer?"

Other foundations are interested in researching and documenting the work of the artist-founder's contemporaries as well as his or her own work. Jack Cowart, executive director of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, spearheaded a project to save and document the archive of renowned photographer Harry Shunk, who, with his longtime partner Jean Kender,

the material is ongoing. Cowart, who knew and worked with Lichtenstein during his lifetime, says the artist would not have wanted the foundation to be focused solely on his own art.

In some instances, when a single artist's oeuvre is not enough to support a foundation, artists have joined forces with nonprofits or with each other. In 2000, artist Squeak Carnwath; her husband, Gary Knecht; and their friend Viola Frey incorporated the Artists' Legacy Foundation. Carnwath and Frey (who died in 2004) planned to bequeath their artwork to the organization, and all three arranged to leave it their estates. Over the



**Installation view of "Bigger, Better, More: The Art of Viola Frey" at the Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin, 2009. Frey joined forces with two others to create a foundation, which helped organize this posthumous exhibition of her work.**

captured such seminal art events as Yves Klein's 1960 *Leap Into the Void*, as well as early photos of artists including Warhol and Lucio Fontana, openings at the Leo Castelli and Sonnabend galleries, and major Christo installations.

Shunk, who became a recluse in Greenwich Village later in life, died intestate. In 2008, the Lichtenstein Foundation, housed just blocks away in Lichtenstein's former West Village studio, acquired Shunk's entire archive of more than 100,000 items, with over 60,000 printed photographs. Cowart says it was important to act quickly to save this treasure trove of photographs, and the task of sorting, documenting, and archiving

years, the foundation has helped organize exhibitions of their work, including a posthumous multivenue exhibition of Frey's work, entitled "Bigger, Better, More," in 2009. Now, says Diane Frankel, former executive director of the foundation (she left in September to become a consultant to museums), the foundation is starting the process of bringing in another artist.

Vincent points out: "If you create a foundation, there is a very big financial obligation. So when I talk to artists, I tell them, 'If the art couldn't support the artist during the artist's lifetime, then it likely won't support a foundation unless there are additional funds.'"



**Robert Rauschenberg  
working in his Lafayette  
Street studio in New York,  
1965. He was heavily involved  
in philanthropy and social  
causes throughout his career.**

Leah Levy, director and cotrustee of the Jay DeFeo Trust in Berkeley, California, set up by the artist before her death in 1989, knows the challenges all too well. DeFeo, whose art making did not support her, left what funds she had to endow a prize at Mills College in Oakland, where she taught. The prize is awarded annually to a graduating M.F.A. student.

DeFeo also "created a trust that would have all of her art, but she left no funds to support that entity or endeavor," says Levy. "I understand the thinking that you have all of this artwork. That is a fantastic asset, but there are really very few artists who set up foundations and have them be successful if there isn't already an existing market or funds to support it."

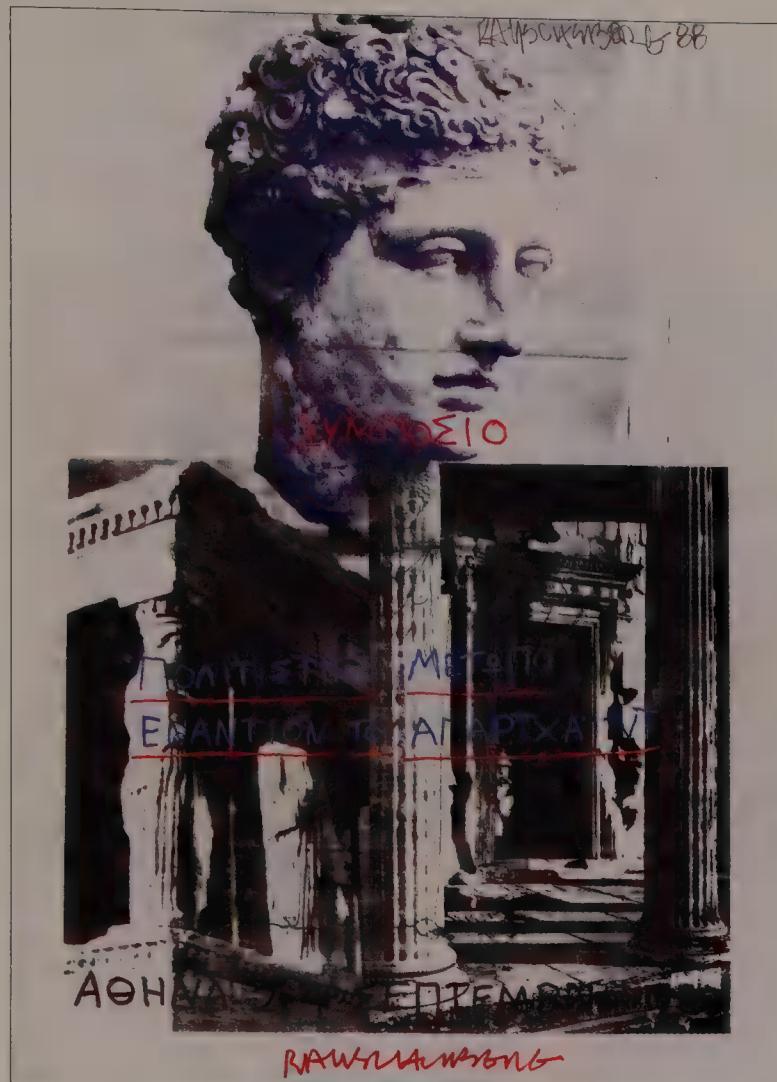
**Since the realm** of cultural philanthropy is relatively young, "there is no blueprint for this," says Kerrie Buitrago, executive vice president of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. The mission of the foundation, established in 1985, is to aid "needy and worthy artists." Grants are made on an ongoing basis as applications are received and approved. The foundation has given away over \$54 million in thousands of grants to artists in 72 countries since it became active.

Charles Bergman, the foundation's chairman and CEO, recalls that Pollock's widow, Lee Krasner, only reluctantly agreed to the formation of the foundation at the urging of her lawyers, who countered her resistance to preparing a will by convincing her that her and her late husband's considerable assets should be used for a "worthy" purpose.

In 1985, the year following Krasner's death, Bergman was charged with overseeing \$10 million in a conservative investment portfolio and about \$10 million worth of art, much of it by Krasner. At the end of 2008, even with the dramatic decline in the stock market and the considerable amount of money the foundation had given away, it had \$45 million in total assets.

The house and studio where the couple lived and worked in East Hampton were given to the Stony Brook Foundation of the State University of New York, which agreed to operate the property as a study center and public museum. It is now a national landmark.

Ronald Spencer, an art lawyer who has advised many of the leading foundations, says that the most important thing in setting up and operating a foundation is "to get the right people involved. You need people who are familiar with the artist's



**LEFT** Rauschenberg made this poster for an international anti-apartheid symposium in 1988. **RIGHT** Shepard Fairey's *The Future Is Unwritten*, 2011, is the first in the "Artist ■ Activist" print project launched by the Rauschenberg Foundation to benefit the Coalition for the Homeless.

work. You need someone who knows the art market, if selling work is a factor. You need someone who knows how nonprofits should be governed and how boards should be run. You are not going to find all these disciplines in one person."

Christy MacLear, executive director of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, says that "you have to be really considerate about matching assets to the artist's vision and to opportunities." The Rauschenberg Foundation "exists to both further his legacy and be philanthropic. Understanding who Bob was is the essence of his legacy," says MacLear. In deciding on grantees, she says, the foundation considers the question: "What values are emblematic of the artist? Fearless, experimental, cross disciplinary, innovative."

Rauschenberg established the foundation in 1990, but throughout his career he was heavily involved in philanthropy and social causes through activities and entities, including smaller foundations through which he collaborated with others.

Since the artist's death in 2008, the foundation has been assuming oversight of his considerable assets, including funds, artwork, and real estate in New York and Florida. This includes the building that houses the foundation, a beautiful

19th-century five-story structure at the southeastern edge of Greenwich Village that was purchased by the artist in 1965 for a modest five-figure sum.

For its Arts Innovation and Collaboration Program Grant, the foundation identified over 60 organizations across the country before narrowing its selection of potential grantees down to about two dozen. The list consists of smaller organizations that "are really experimenting and pushing the boundaries of artistic discipline," says MacLear. Grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000 will be made to about 10 or 12 of these organizations.

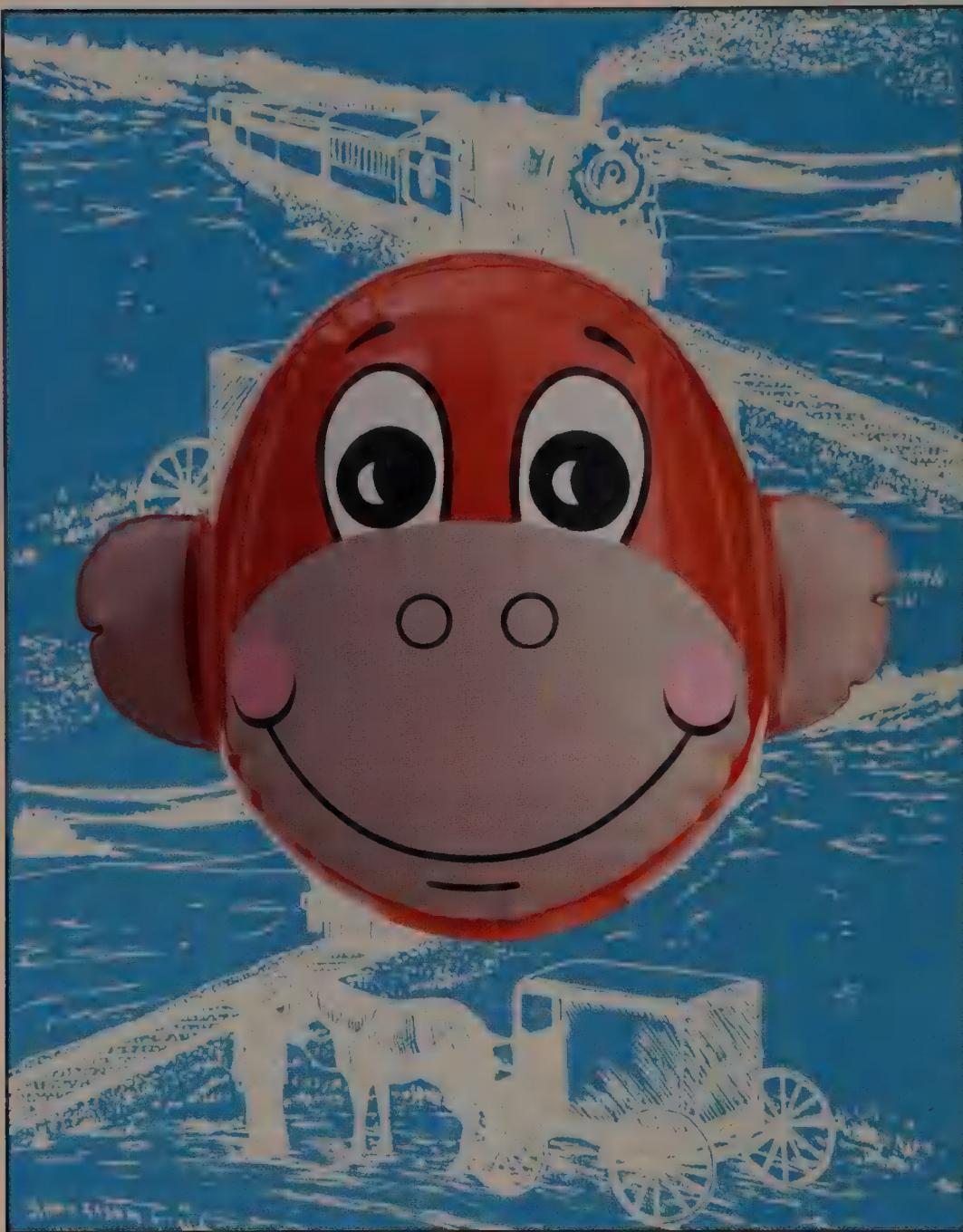
As part of a partnership with the Coalition for the Homeless, the foundation has selected artist Shepard Fairey to develop a print based on both the inspiration of Rauschenberg and the theme of overcoming homelessness. Proceeds from sales and distribution of the print will go to support the partnership.

In the Aspen study, Storr explained why Rauschenberg's model is so important for other artists. "Long before his death in 2008," Storr said, "he acted on an idea that was floating around at the end of the 1960s, at the point where, for the first time really, American artists, living American artists, younger American artists, in any case, had money to play with."



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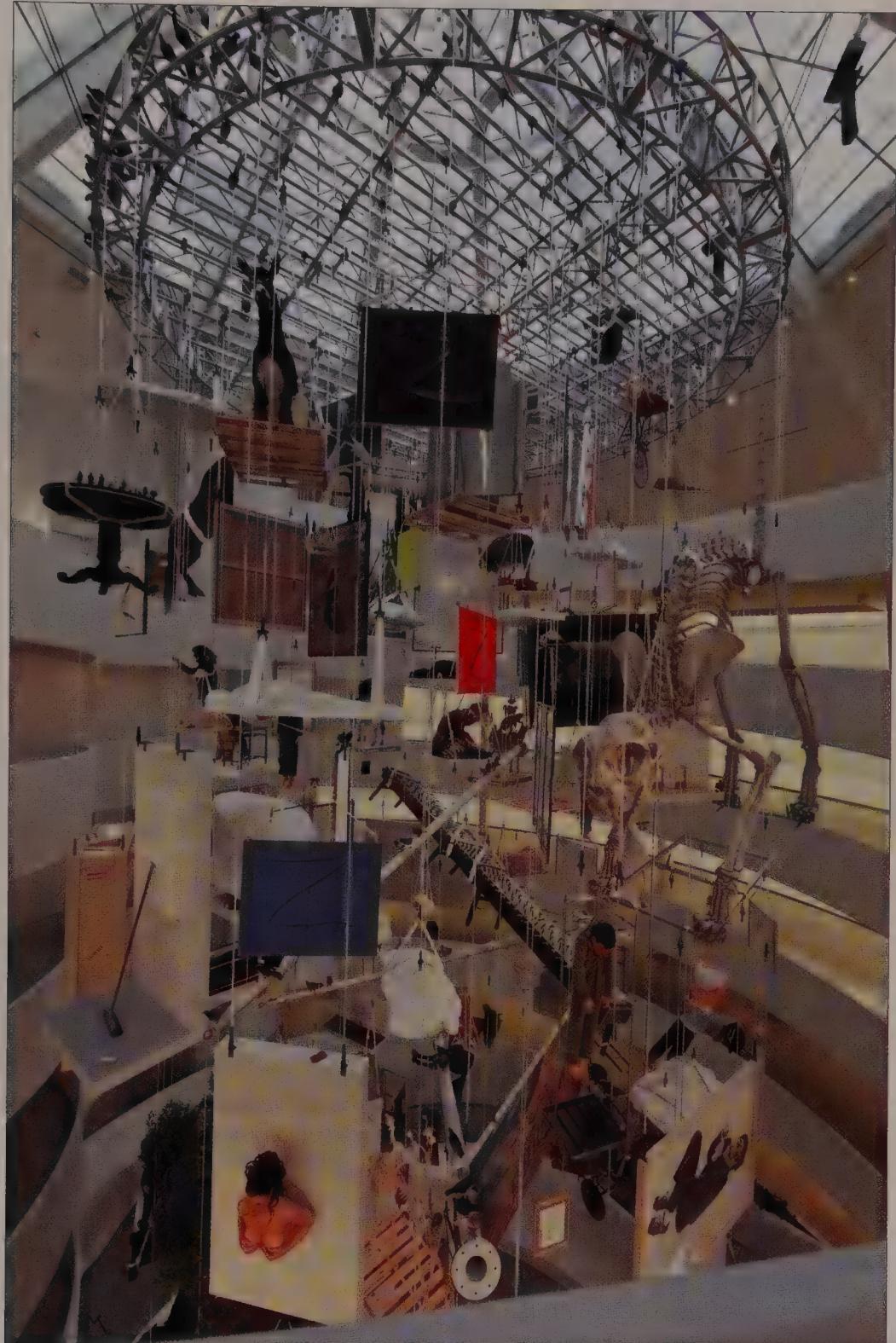
# Maurizio Cattelan

**Guggenheim Museum**  
**Through January 22**

Those who are impressed by spectacle and/or taxidermy will be thoroughly satisfied with *All*, the superficial yet mind-boggling retrospective of Italian provocateur Maurizio Cattelan. Over 20 years worth of the artist's work—128 sculptures, photographs, neon signs, billboards, and paintings—dangle from a steel frame at the top of the museum's rotunda, filling the void at the center of the building and leaving the walls entirely blank. This hanging most resembles a public execution, made all the more poignant (for those who care) by Cattelan's announcement that the show will be his final work of art, even though he's only 51 years of age.

Defying a chronological or even thoughtful thematic arrangement, the installation launches the works on a collision course in space. Some meanings can be discerned, but then, it's almost by accident. *Frank and Jamie* (2002), two policemen hanging upside down, can be viewed behind *Him* (2000), a child-size rendition of Adolf Hitler, as if the cops were incapable of arresting the villain who, in turn, prays for forgiveness. *Frau C.* (2007), a lifelike woman in the posture of a crucifix, presides over *Charlie Don't Surf* (1997), a young boy with hands impaled on a school desk by yellow pencils. The sense of death is palpable, even beyond such pieces as JFK in his coffin, in *Now* (2004), or the pope felled by a meteor, in *La Nona Ora* (1999), probably Cattelan's most famous work.

With the further inclusion of four horses, five donkeys, numerous dogs, one ostrich, an elephant, and a full-scale dinosaur skeleton, one wonders what keeps everything from crashing to the ground. The political content of Cattelan's work appears to have been



drained, especially with *L.O.V.E.* (2010), a model of a hand featuring an erect middle finger with no indication that the original sculpture is installed outside the Milan Stock Exchange. Missing also are the artist's pranks, such as curating the "Wrong Gallery," a miniature exhibition space first installed in a window in a Chelsea doorway. For visitors eager to learn more about the artist, the museum directs them not to wall labels, but to an iPad app, which provides everything but the price tags.

—Barbara Pollack

**Maurizio Cattelan,**  
***All*, 2011–12,**  
**installation view.**

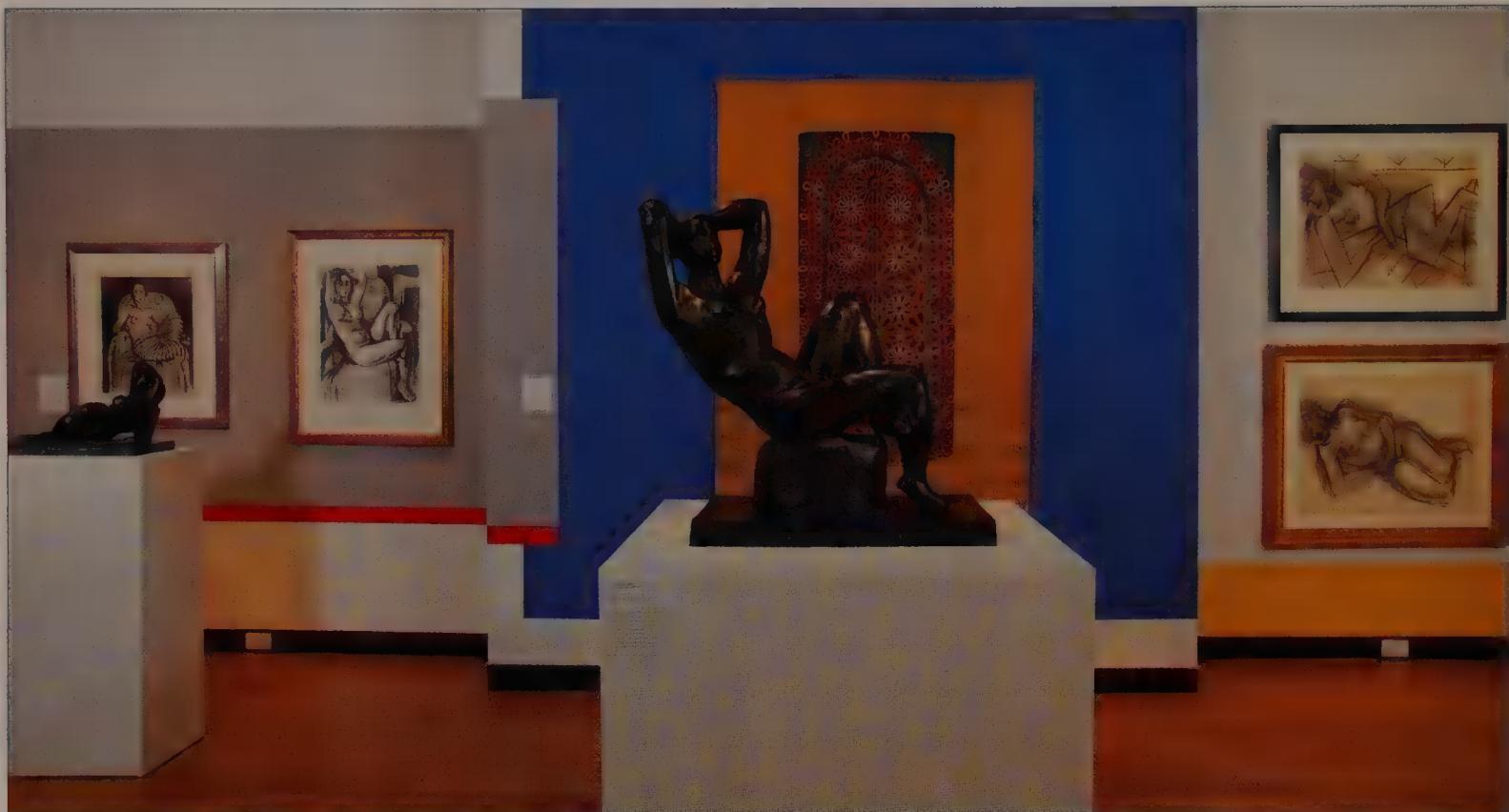
## Henri Matisse

Eyken MacLean

During the course of his career, Matisse developed intense (but apparently non-sexual) relationships with a succession of female models, painting, drawing, and sculpting them obsessively for extended periods of time. Far more than physiques for hire, they were, as he readily acknowledged, working partners

four female models who figured most prominently in his work from the mid-teens until his death in 1954. The first was a dark Italian beauty called Lorette, hired in late 1916, as Matisse moved toward a less geometrically severe, more sensual treatment of the figure. He delighted in dressing her up in fanciful costumes, and the exhibition included a portrait of Lorette regally arrayed in an elaborately embroidered jacket. Meanwhile, in *Lorette*

than in the group of works devoted to Henriette Darricarrère, a dancer who became Matisse's preferred model for his famous odalisque series of the 1920s. Displayed near a velvety lithograph of Henriette nude, languorously reclining in a patterned chair, is Matisse's most daring freestanding sculpture, *Large Seated Nude* (1922–29)—dramatically simplified in form, but virtually identical in pose.



Left to right: Henri Matisse's *Reclining Nude (II)*, 1927, bronze; *Large Odalisque in Striped Pantaloons*, 1925, lithograph; *Nude with a Blue Cushion beside a Fireplace*, 1925, lithograph; *Large Seated Nude*, 1922–29, bronze; a North African pierced hanging once owned by Matisse, late 19th or early 20th century, textile; *Reclining Nude*, 1938, charcoal on paper; *Reclining Nude*, 1938, charcoal on paper.

in his exploration of the expressive possibilities of color, line, and the human figure. "I depend entirely on my model," he said.

"Matisse and the Model," a museum-worthy gathering of some 46 works, was the first major survey of this fascinating and fundamental aspect of Matisse's art and working methods. Curated by Ann Dumas, of London's Royal Academy, it began with a few gems from the early 1900s, when Matisse could rarely afford paid models. Among them are a Fauvist portrait of his daughter, and favorite model at this time, *Marguerite* (1906), and his early sculpture *The Serf* (1900–3), a ferociously muscled nude, based on some 100 sessions with a burly Italian male model called Bevilacqua.

From there the show focused on the

*in a White Blouse* (1916), Matisse presents her, with startling directness, as the simple peasant woman she was.

Works here depicting Antoinette Arnould, a stylish young French girl who became Matisse's model shortly after he moved to Nice, in 1917, included the spectacular *Woman in a Flowered Hat* (1919), in which she wears—with great aplomb—one of the extravagant chapeaus fashioned for her by the artist himself. The image, for all its lushness, still retains a clear structure and solidity. But in *The Painter and His Model: Studio Interior* (1921), his last painting of Antoinette, Matisse employed a much lighter, more decorative touch and coloristic brilliance.

The exhibition abounded with such telling comparisons, nowhere more so

Matisse's longest sustained relationship with a model was with Lydia Delectorskaya, a Russian émigré who began working for him in 1932, and who remained as a studio assistant, caregiver, and companion until his death. Blonde, with an innate elegance (Matisse called her his "ice princess"), she is posed in a flowing taffeta evening gown in a charcoal from 1937. And it is Lydia's finely chiseled features that are rendered with a few bold strokes in a remarkable brush-and-ink portrait from 1946. Matisse's pursuit of simplicity and an art of pure form and color was ultimately realized in his cutouts—for which Lydia prepared the colored papers—examples of which closed this deeply satisfying and thought-provoking exhibition.

—Elizabeth Wilson

UP NOW

## Lee Bontecou

FreedmanArt

Through February 11

Sailing into the future with a fleet of fantastic mobiles, this magnificent exhibition would indicate that Lee Bontecou has no intention of slowing down. The works here are at once delicate and powerful, modernist and contemporary, serene and frightening. It is a difficult balance, but Bontecou handles the contradictions with a masterful use of unconventional materials.

The sculptor earned her reputation decades ago with terrifying canvas wall friezes that offered up bottomless darkness. Losing none of her edge, she has gone on to transform the same combination of wire and enameled canvas into a trio of starships, created between 2004 and 2011, hanging from the gallery's ceiling. With spinnakers full of wind, these stationary vessels carry a bevy of lead weights, dripping down like tears. Both mechanical and biomorphic, the sculptures encapsulate Bontecou's favorite obsessions—fear and freedom—in three powerful forms.

Set on the floor, in separate areas, is a pair of sandboxes, in which, over the last six years, Bontecou has been playing with a variety of materials and formations. In one, she has experimented with white ceramic orbs with open mouths—striped

lips and upper teeth—yowling to be fed. They are surrounded by glazed disks, which, like bulging eyes, emerge from the sand. The other sandbox is more of a garden of earthly delights, with plantlike forms made from wire and clay, framed by a row of ship sails on the left and a cluster of dried flowers on the right.

Installed throughout the gallery are Bontecou's drawings, riveting in their own right. In a 2011 series of graphite-on-paper works, she explores the vortex at the center of the eye. These drawings retain the artist's enduring appreciation of the horrors of nature. Carnivorous fish and hungry birds stab at viewers with their pointy teeth, vicious beaks, and piercing gaze.

—Barbara Pollack

## Walton Ford

Paul Kasmin

Walton Ford's enthralling new watercolors, three of which are enormous, measuring 9 by 12 feet to accommodate the

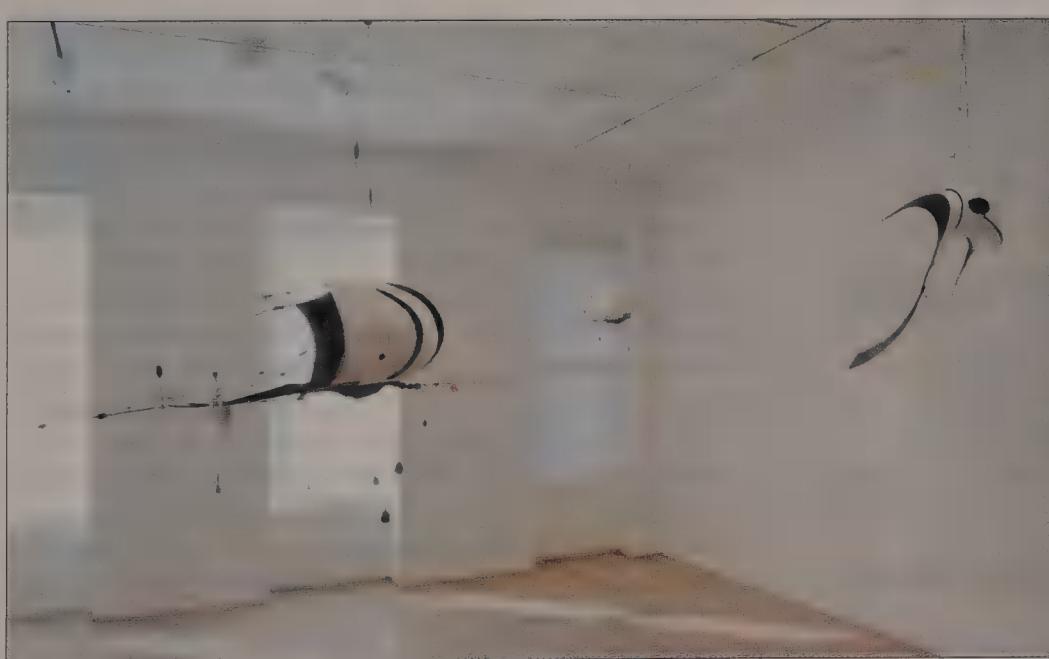
Walton Ford, *On the island*, 2011,

watercolor mounted on aluminum panel, 108" x 144" x 7/8". Paul Kasmin.

giant head of King Kong, are marvels of illustrative precision and gleeful perversity. They have the look of 18th- and 19th-century naturalist drawings with a narrative—Audubon laced with cruelty but also sympathy and humor. Take *I don't like to look at him, Jack; It makes me think of that awful day*; and *On the island*, the three mostly black and white gorilla close-ups. Their titles are the words actress Fay Wray spoke to her human beau in front of the love-struck, captured Kong in the iconic 1933 film. Unlike the more perceptive Beauty who sees the true nobility beneath the Beast's superficial ugliness, Wray's character is unmoved by his passion and his plight. Ford's portraits, however, register Kong's grief and despair, making him a surrogate for all unrequited lovers.

The six other watercolors, also of good size, beautifully drawn, are based on a disturbing excerpt from Audubon's memoirs in which he describes a large monkey, "the man of the woods," who, with utter sangfroid, stalks and kills a pretty parrot. Ford depicts it as a decapitation, the blood spurting, the monkey ejaculating as he rips off the bird's head. The last picture in the series shows the pet monkey chained, with a few feathers clutched in his paw. The moral of the story seems to be that although nature can be savage, civilization is also guilty of cruelty, as shown in the displacement and enslavement of the hapless, tragic King Kong—who, clutching Fay Wray in his paw, places her out of harm's way before plunging to his death. Now, that's civilized.

—Lilly Wei



Lee Bontecou, "Untitled," 2004-11,

welded steel, epoxy, wire mesh, canvas, porcelain, and paint,  
left to right: 84" x 24" x 66"; 41" x 11" x 32"; and 53" x 10" x 25".

FreedmanArt.

## Charles Simonds

**Knoedler & Company**

Sculptor Charles Simonds's show "Mental Earth, Growths and Smears" offers the immediate delight of sensuous objects evoking the earth and past civilizations.

Simonds is best known for his "Dwellings," which he began making in the 1970s. Those works constitute his own variety of street art: miniature brick habitations that he'd install in derelict spaces around New York's Lower East Side. Building for an imaginary tribe he called the "Little People," Simonds used clay when it was hardly considered cool or could even be thought of as a medium for politically provocative art. He eventually took his "Dwellings" global, working in urban sites in Europe and China, and he produced films and essays that laid out his aims and the beliefs and mythologies of his imaginary societies.

The pieces here, however, are in no sense street art. Nevertheless, they are in line with the philosophical concerns Simonds has held since the '70s. The inherent wit of his enterprise, with its puzzling distortions of scale and placement, is powerfully evident in this installation. The massive earth-colored signature piece *Mental Earth* (2002) hangs suspended in the main space like a chandelier, while the tendrils of the ethereal porcelain *Tumbleweed* (1993) grip their bases. Are the *Stone Smears* (2011) graphics, painters' gestures interpreted in



Charles Simonds, *Mental Earth*, 2002,  
metal, polyurethane, paper, and clay, 72" x 126" x 89". Knoedler & Company.

clay and other media, or are they the literal results of Simonds' studies of feces? Don't stumble over the titles, however: these works compel by the sheer force of their material presence.

In ranking the civilizations of his "Little People," Simonds lauds those who never forget their histories. As for his own, he acknowledges Professor Stanley Fish, with whom he studied Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which introduced the artist to the power of epics from the past. Philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto provides a catalogue essay assessing the intellectual basis of Simonds's project. The work is fortunate to have such an eloquent interpreter.

—Diana Ketcham

As ARTnews went to press, Knoedler & Company announced it was closing.

## Rashaad Newsome

**Marlborough**

In "Herald," Rashaad Newsome's massive and elaborately framed collages, accompanied by one video work, celebrated and tenderly critiqued the ideals of a storybook hip-hop lifestyle. Within these baroque, flamboyant works, layers of paper cut from print advertising were



Rashaad Newsome, *Black Barbie*, 2011,  
collage in customized antique frame, 56 3/4" x 43 1/2" x 3".  
Marlborough Chelsea.

artfully arranged to create novel coats of arms for an imagined contemporary African American society. All manner of luxury goods gave off sparkle and bling while taking on almost religious significance. The tributes to excess and

success were composed of images, such as a jewel-encrusted cross, a diamond Piaget watch, attractive female body parts, purple flowers adorned with pricey dragonfly brooches, rings, a yacht and jet,

black American Express cards, and hundreds of gold chains.

In *Black Barbie* (all works 2011) bodiless legs in high heels as well as shiny

gems are fashioned as a kaleidoscopic tribute to female rapper Nicki Minaj. Surrounding the piece is a reworked antique frame with pink flourishes that makes the collage seem especially cake-like; its corners are adorned with black female fists clenching currency. *Blazon* was one of the more male-oriented bits of heraldry here, with designer sneakers and a sports car on a background of cutout flames topped by a baseball hat/crown headpiece.

To ascribe these tributes to covetousness and consumerism would be an understatement. Even as each vied for attention with shine and craft, it was the framed video screen playing a 15-minute loop that drew focus. Beginning in black and white, the narrative depicts a solemn ritual as the artist marches up a cathedral aisle—between rows of sweatshirt-hooded men—to be crowned. The video, titled *Herald*, changes to color, and entices us with jewels and a topless winged female dancer as a hard-edged version of a Gregorian chant plays.

—Doug McClemont

# Pepón Osorio

Ronald Feldman

Exuberantly detailed, meticulously researched, and cobbled together from countless elements, Pepón Osorio's socially engaged installation *Drowned in a Glass of Water* (2010) rotates on an enormous creaking turntable. With its title referring to a saying about life's overwhelming problems, the piece is wondrous, unsettling, and replete with the ambiguities of life and art. All kinds of sculpture—assembled, found and altered—and painting, as well as tantalizing video double takes, echo and rein-

force an unspoken narrative of loss, pain, and vulnerability. The installation is based on two real families with absent fathers: one from blue-collar North Adams, Massachusetts, the other from nearby, collegiate Williamstown. Water is the dominant metaphor. Transparency is in the very process of this work. A collaboration with the families as well as students and faculty at Williams College, the installation was originally made and assembled in a North Adams Chevy dealer's showroom during the summer of 2010, in full view of the local public. Then it went to the Williams College Museum of Art.

Osorio's concern for the travails of real life is reflected in the installation's structure. As it revolves, the cluttered interior of one home morphs into the manicured exterior of the other, linking architecture, landscape, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and ornament through parallel but opposite details. A woman in a crimson wedding cake-style gown (crocheted by 23 people) in the chaotic living room could be a Velázquez infanta, but her arms are plastered with Band-Aids and toy police cars circle the empty wheelchair near her. As the piece turns, viewers gradually absorb the upended furniture, pills, Hummel figurines, a boy in a helmet who merges with the

TV, and a girl collapsed on a sofa. When the interior inexorably shifts to the obverse exterior, with its manicured lawn, pool, hospital gurney, and mysterious golden heart under glass, the work is no less unsettling. The parlor wall has reversed to a mirrored divider that implicates everyone.



Pepón Osorio, *Drowned in a Glass of Water*, 2010, mixed-media installation.

Ronald Feldman.

*Purifier* (2010), an additional watery piece in this exhibition of four works, provided another reversal. It consists simply of a glass of water mounted up near the ceiling and a text explaining that placing a glass of water at the highest point in a room is supposed to protect the space and clear the air. The back gallery was transformed with the clapboard wall and iron gates of a narrative video installation. Osorio also orchestrated a performance piece on the sidewalk

the day the exhibition opened: a staged arrest that took place at designated times.

—Kim Levin

## Adam Straus

Nohra Haime

Sometimes it's the modest gesture that produces the most mesmerizing results. Such was Adam Straus's achievement

with this series, "Taking Notes or Trying to Keep the Fiddle Tuned." The compact oil-on-paper works here were as luminous as Hudson River School paintings.

Born in Miami and living now on Long Island's East End, Straus depicts scenes from both locales. He has a particular knack for depicting light at varying times of day and under different weather conditions, as could be seen in *Bridge in Fog* (2007), with its glowing streetlights, and in *Moonrise Over Meeting House Creek* (2007), where a singular orb is reflected in a shallow marsh. In images such as *Fire & Water* (2008), with its candle imposed on a serene seascape, and a picture of the sky titled simply *Air: Clouds and Sun* (2010), the light produces mystical overtones. What was impressive throughout was how much the artist conveys in such a modest scale.

Straus's paintings are also deeply personal, almost diaristic. *Noah Looking at Something Outside of the Picture* (2010) depicts the artist's son dressed in a red sweatshirt and jeans, looking through binoculars while standing in a vast field of tall grass under a cloud-strewn blue sky. Like his father, Noah is an observer, lost in the beauty of what we suppose is



Adam Straus, *Noah Looking at Something Outside of the Picture*, 2010, oil on paper, 11" x 15". Nohra Haime.

before him. We almost sensed what he could see based on the other paintings on view—of beaches, country roads, palm trees, and rain storms. He might be anticipating the view in *Sunset—Pixelated* (2011), featuring an orange glow over a dark-blue sea, broken into bits as if digitally created but also reminiscent of a seascape by Monet.

—Barbara Pollack

## Brett Bigbee

Alexandre

In this show of oil paintings and graphite drawings, Brett Bigbee's meticulous renderings expressed a sensibility that is at once old fashioned and eerily post-modern. The artist's small, beautifully limned still lifes of apples, tomatoes, and pears lined up neatly on tables recall the controlled 19th-century canvases of Raphaelle Peale. But Bigbee's portraits, whose subjects look un-

comfortable in their classic New England settings, are less comprehensible and convey a sense of unease and other-worldliness.

In *Joe and James* (2001–3), the artist's two young sons, painted in sepia tones, stand somberly and awkwardly on a brown beach, their backs turned to a bland, blue sea. Because the perspective is subtly skewed, the boys appear to be cut from separate images. Their monochromatic skin seems drained of blood—as if they were not real children but specters. The little girl in *Abby* (2005–10) staring out at the viewer is brilliantly lit, but the crepuscular coastal landscape reveals that it's actually late in the day. Why, we wonder, is the girl portrayed so brightly? Could she be from another world?

Less mysterious but still disquieting is *James* (1999–2001). Painted with a stylized realism that marries Piero della Francesca with George Tooker, it shows Bigbee's toddler son standing before the artist's wife, Ann, his left hand raised,



Brett Bigbee, *James*, 1999–2001,  
oil on canvas, 47 3/4" x 22 1/2".

Alexandre.

striking for both their bold, unexpected colors and their expressive compositions. Though each work constitutes a singular universe, when installed together, they shared a spatial language and sense of balance.

The paintings' narrow bands of unbroken hues, many with jagged edges, suggested everything from fences or tracks to shields and lightning bolts. Smaller works featured collage elements and watercolor on

as if in reverse benediction. Ann looks placidly into the middle distance, as modest and chaste as the Virgin. Behind them, a simple, wood-frame window opens onto nightfall. Despite the Renaissance references, this canvas, like all Bigbee's work, feels very American.

—Mona Molarsky

## Clinton Hill

Meredith Ward Fine Art and Pavel Zoubok

These concurrent exhibitions highlighted the paintings and collages of the late American artist Clinton Hill. At Meredith Ward Fine Art, more than 20 of the artist's works, collectively titled "Spatial Meditations," painted between 1964 and 1974, were on view. Hill's minimal abstractions here, whether in oil or watercolor, were

their bold, unexpected

board. From up close, one could see pieces of advertisements and fragments of a map of Baltimore.

Also in the exhibition was an intriguing suite of nine collages from 1974, made of scraps of yellowing paper laid down in perfect harmony with bits of masking tape and hash marks composed in black marker. Less than 12 inches square, the fading beige works were like elegant archeological finds, showing their age without immediately revealing their secrets.

The show at Pavel Zoubok was titled "constructing: CLINTON HILL" and included collages from the 1950s and '60s as well as wood constructions that had been made in the early '80s. The earlier, more intimate works seemed to have been the products of a different artistic sensibility, with busy forms and sketches harmonizing with sheet-music backgrounds and portions of ticket stubs. Black and white were dominant in these works, and like the musical notes that showed through some collages, the viewer's eye danced quickly in and around the dynamic drawings. Abstract wall sculptures in wood or plastic brought to mind the work of Frank Stella and gave off their own musical vibrations. Both of these exhibitions provided a welcome reminder of Hill's widely varied and experimental artistic practices.

—Doug McClemon



Clinton Hill, *Untitled*, 1965, oil on canvas, 50" x 50".

Meredith Ward Fine Art.

# Trudy Benson

Mike Weiss

Adding to the growing list of women currently re-imagining Abstract Expressionist painting, Trudy Benson makes works that do not skimp on exuberant color and gesture. Nor do they lack fearlessness with regard to paint application. This show included 14 canvases (all 2011), many of them large, onto which Benson has brushed, rolled, sprayed, dripped, and even combed oil, acrylic, enamel, and Flashe.

*Censor* features blue and mauve, slathered like stucco, along with swathes of stripes that resemble buttery cake frosting and curlicues of ropey lines squeezed directly from the tube. Curves and zigzags of dark spray paint imperfectly echo some of these motifs to suggest that they float above the surface and cast shadows. In fact, in nearly half of the works in the exhibition, this activity overlaid a skewed grid of black squares, which, in the case of *Censor*, was marked by orthogonal curves streaked with color.



Trudy Benson, *Red Giant*, 2011,

acrylic, Flashe, enamel, spray paint, and oil on canvas, 96" x 104".

Mike Weiss.

The grid offers the painting's only compositional structure. Rather than evoking the rigors of Minimalism, however, it appears to convey a cosmic depth, lending a wild futuristic spin to the tension between illusionistic pictorial space and the physicality of paint.

By contrast, *Red Giant* lacks an underlying grid but marshals its elements into

a cohesive centralized image. Showing an oblong shape encircling an orb with an apparent horizon, traversed by a number of rings, it conjures a celestial body. Although figure and ground oscillate in a visual puzzle worthy of Al Held, *Red Giant* possesses a painterly muscularity that is entirely Benson's own.

—Joseph R. Wolin

## UP NOW

### 'Grisaille'

Luxembourg & Dayan

Through January 14

Few art-historical techniques are as closely identified with Old Master painting as grisaille. Giotto and Jan van Eyck employed the technique, working with shades of gray, to create tromp l'oeil images that approximated marble sculpture. So organizing a show based on grisaille in modern and contemporary art might seem a challenge. But independent curator Alison

Gingeras has assembled a compelling selection of abstract and representational paintings, drawings, sculpture, and photographs by artists who use grayness as a crucial component of their work, much as artists did during the Renaissance.

Besides a handful of 18th- and 19th-century works, Gingeras has included objects by artists ranging from Leonor Fini and Alberto Giacometti to Gerhard Richter, Alex Katz, John Currin, Rudolf Stingel, and Dan Colen. While some

use gradations of light and dark to carve forms, as Vija Celmins does in her 1972 graphite rendering of the ocean's surface, others, like Robert Morris, take a more conceptual tack. His formless 1967 draped sheaths of heavy gray felt are a physical representation of the amorphous nature of the color. Gray conveys a sense of nothingness, representing the



Rudolph Stingel, *Untitled*, 2011, oil on canvas, 16" x 13".  
Luxembourg & Dayan.

ethereal and the absence of mass. It is the color of fog, steam, clouds, and smoke. Giacometti, whose 1958 oil-on-canvas portrait of his brother's head, *Tête de Diego*, shows a ghostlike figure disintegrating into a deepening void.

Minimalist works by Agnes Martin, Brice Marden, and Frank Stella demonstrate gray's power to erase surface and form. The striking V-shape of Stella's large 1964 painting *Sieve More*, for instance, loses its impact beneath its murky surface. In Christopher Wool's *Jazz and AWOL* (2005), patches of gray wash overlaid with graffiti-like gray lines suggest a kind of mutation of states, from gaseous to solid. Meanwhile, Andy Warhol's fantastic paint-and-silk-screen *Shadow (Black and White)*, 1978, articulates a captivating transformation from black to white, and vice versa, via gray.

A show focusing on gray would be incomplete without Jasper Johns. Here is his *Screen Print 5* (1968), a spoon and fork dangling from a string, coupled with instructions on how the utensils should be hung. Gray's association with things industrial emerges throughout as well, with works by Richard Prince and Sigmar Polke showing the color's connection with modernity. This makes perfect sense. The innovations of Giotto, are, after all, credited with pulling Medieval Europe into the Renaissance. —Meredith Mendelsohn



Edward Burtynsky, *Oil Spill #7, Ground Zero, Gulf of Mexico, June 24, 2010*, chromogenic color print, 39" ■ 52". Howard Greenberg.

## Edward Burtynsky

**Howard Greenberg and Bryce Wolkowitz**

Since the 1980s, Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky has been depicting the terrible beauty in landscapes shaped and sometimes devastated by industrial enterprise. These two polished and handsome gallery exhibitions offered up a range of projects that Burtynsky has undertaken in that time. But what really stole the show was his work from the past two years.

At Howard Greenberg, a minisurvey was on view, going back to *Railcuts #8* (1985/2005), an image of a tiny train chugging along a treacherous hillside by the Thompson River in British Columbia. Even in his earliest photographs, Burtynsky reveals his fascination with scale and his preference to shoot the landscape from an elevated position. But his talent and ideas come together most fully in his recent series, "Oil Spill," shot in the Gulf of Mexico in June 2010. In works like *Oil Spill #7, Ground Zero, Gulf of Mexico, June 24, 2010* he exposes a panoramic view of a rig on fire with a boat spraying water on the site as plumes of smoke fill the air; it's a scene worthy of a Turner watercolor. *Oil Spill #9* (2010), a picture of an oil slick at rip tide, is an almost abstract composition of black biomorphic forms spreading across a cobalt blue sea.

The images at Bryce Wolkowitz revealed Burtynsky's newfound predilection toward abstraction. In September 2010, the photographer began taking

by Dubuffet. Here, man is not destroying the landscape but enhancing its viability, offering some hope in contrast to the more pessimistic message underlying many of Burtynsky's most ravishing and troubling photographs.

—Barbara Pollack

## Lisette Model

**Bruce Silverstein**

Lisette Model moved to New York from Paris in the late 1930s and took her camera right to the streets. Although her work was shown at MoMA and championed by art directors, her influence as a teacher, on students like Diane Arbus, occasionally eclipsed her reputation as an artist.

This compelling show looked not so much at Model's legacy as at sources for her own work, pairing her forceful images of New York with grotesque studies of urban types by such German Ex-

aerial pictures of the barren hills in the Monegros region of Spain, where farmers have carved out fields despite the forbidding conditions. In *Dryland Farming #21* (2010), the countryside looks as graphic and undulating as a near-monochrome work

pressionists as Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, George Grosz, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Like them, Model was interested in exaggerating what she saw, and she used the tools of her medium freely to this end, cropping and enlarging negatives to accentuate the drama.

Included here were a few of the scathing portraits of the rich taken in Nice at the start of Model's career, but images of New York dominated. One series, studying shadows cast by pedestrians, recorded dark, cartoonish forms with tiny feet and inflated bodies. Anonymous and powerful, the shapes provide a silhouette of the city. Another series looked at reflections in shop windows, chaotically mixing street life with store merchandise. The most striking New York images were portraits taken in the city's high- and low-end venues. A pair of ladies with lace on their hats sip drinks at a Hotel Pierre fashion show, while a large woman with a wide stance sits in a chair on the Lower East Side. Neither of these is a flattering image, but the subjects' vitality comes through nonetheless.

Like Grosz, whom she admired, Model was interested in dramatic effects. But while horror is explicit in drawings such as Bruno Voigt's *The Death Dance Begins* (1933), where green skeletons in evening wear gather around a table, works like Model's *War Rally, New York* (1942), with its sea of faces, appear more neutral, even hopeful.

—Rebecca Robertson



Lisette Model, *Fashion Show, Hotel Pierre, New York, 1940-46*, printed ca. 1955, gelatin silver print mounted to board, 15 3/4" ■ 19 5/8".  
Bruce Silverstein.



Max Jansons, *What's Not to Love?*, 2011, oil on linen, 22" x 30". Graham.

## Max Jansons

By Anita Shapolsky

New York native Max Jansons paints exceedingly charming stylized flowers in vases, as well as teapots and modernist-influenced abstractions. For his whimsical portraits of indoor plant life, he used curved forms to convey a sense of movement, as if each posed "posy" or vine were in the process of growing. Flowing forms such as buds and leaves filled each canvas to its edges and complemented the zigzag patterns of the vases.

In *What's Not to Love?* (2011) a hushed gray-blue field provides the background for the low-key pinks and pale yellows of the dancing blooms. In *Frank's Plant* (2011) the brown, olive, and gray foliage resembles comic-strip speech balloons.

Adding to the buoyant animation of each painting were the artist's smaller brushstrokes. From close up we could see curlicues looping in on one another inside the shape's outline, actively involved in the process of their being created. In a quaint touch, Jansons lined the edges of every canvas with old-fashioned carpenter's tacks, effectively reminding us that we were looking at a painting and not reality. Smaller canvases presented fanciful teapots in profile, their handles coiled as if fitted to a specific unseen hand.

In another group of smaller works inspired by modernism, the artist made abstraction as pleasing as could be imag-

ined and used intimate scale to great effect. These works could be viewed as miniature maps of imaginary places. All of Jansons's choreographed plants and colorful abstractions were composed with a deliberate hand and a visceral response to life's simpler visual treats.

—Doug McClemont

## UP NOW

### Amaranth Ehrenhalt

By Anita Shapolsky

Through January 31

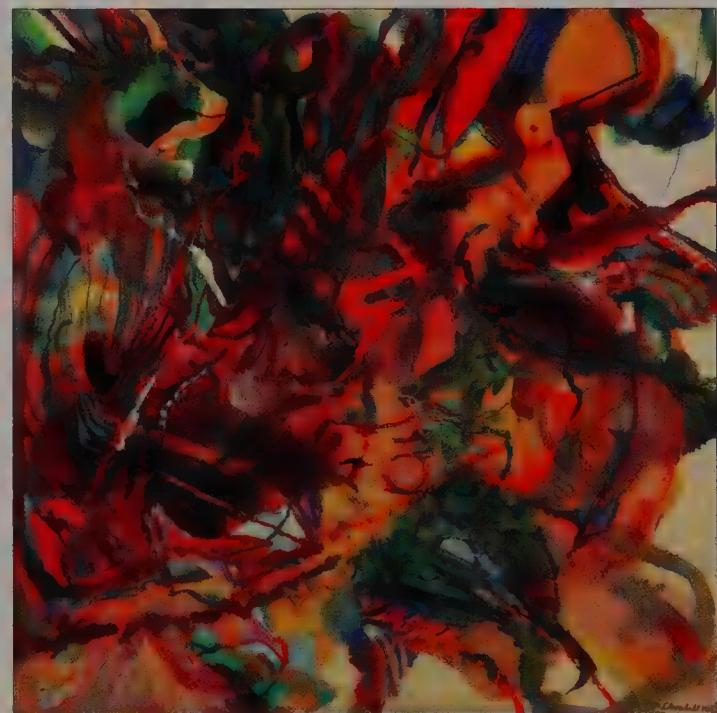
After a career spanning more than half a century, Amaranth Ehrenhalt is finally having her first solo gallery show in New York. This still-working second-generation Abstract Expressionist proves herself an inspired colorist in many mediums, including oil, watercolor, tapestry, mosaic, sculpture, and prints. Traces of the Fauves, as well as of de Kooning and Pollock, hover but don't dominate.

Ehrenhalt first hit her artistic stride near the

end of the 1950s with oil-on-canvas works like *Octameter* (1959), a stenographic jotting of tumultuous vermilions, blues, and greens, injected with white and purple-blacks. Her work is as kinetic as it is colorful. In the sensuous *Carmona* (1957), an explosion of warm colors, tempered with blue and sea-green fissures, seems to send the canvas spinning. Painted in almost transparent layers, the work evokes the mutability of the elements, of fire, air, and water.

Later works, like the striking watercolor/gouache *Vesti* (1974), with its abstract shapes, sharply delineated by black lines, take a less gestural approach but still conjure a visual carnival. Ehrenhalt's combinations of color and texture, light and dark, surprise at every turn. In the mosaic *I sette giorni della settemane* (2002), she places a circle of tumbling bird shapes on a prismatic background, putting Op-art effects to lyrical purpose. Black and white marble triangles support colorful painted ones in the sculpture *Black Bear 2* (2000), whose segments rotate on an axis when they are touched. *Aubrietta* (2008), a small but bold abstract tapestry of rippling blues, lavenders, and greens, enlivened by splotches of orange and yellow, may suddenly suggest the bottom of the ocean floor, covered with shells, coral, and rocks. Whether working with wool, marble, tiles, or paint, Ehrenhalt is fascinated with the physical stuff of this world.

—Mona Molarsky



Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Carmona*, 1957, oil on canvas, 40" x 40".

Anita Shapolsky.

## José Ramón Bas

Alan Klotz

For this show, José Ramón Bas assembled memorabilia from personal trips around the globe. Viewing the many photographs of local children, one almost expected to hear the song "It's Small World (After All)" in the background. (The song originated at the UNICEF pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair.)

Taken with a plastic Diana camera, two examples of which were on display here, the photos—some candid and some posed—were casually presented, unframed and sometimes embellished with doodles and scribbling. They looked like pages torn from an artist's journal.

In fact, Ramón Bas begins much of his work with a journal-like book of musings and images, creating an imagined saga, from which he then extrapolates. The results range from a lovely image of a Senegalese boat on a beach to a series of small, formulaic mug shots of children holding up blackboards that state their feelings and wishes. "I want a sewing machine," reads the missive of a child named Sona, whose head is cropped out of her portrait. "I think about all the children of my age that lives in the streets," wrote a child called Dercas.

While Ramón Bas's affection and affinity for his subjects was evident, his informal treatment of them—almost as

if they were found objects—sometimes seemed trivializing.

More effective was his straightforward, but sensitive, approach to a found cache of postcards that had belonged to his aunt Mercedes, dating back to the 19th century. Transparencies of the sepia-tinged cards encased in resin and framed in wood were strung together and suspended in long strands from the ceiling. These true found objects managed to communicate both the exotic and everyday sensibility of his subjects' much-traveled world.

—Phoebe Hoban

## Eugene Brodsky

Sears-Peyton

In this exhibition of Eugene Brodsky's silk-screen paintings, the signature image, which appears in his work in various states and scales, is of lace-curtain-covered French doors partially open into a room. A section of an ornated

wrought-iron balcony is in the foreground. The metaphors here are rampant and quite poetic. Layers, silhouettes, openings, and textures—from solid to gauzy as well as transparent to translucent to opaque—play off against one another.

References to the methods of silk-screening were evident throughout the show. The challenge for viewers was to figure out whether they were observing a



José Ramón Bas, from the series "Ndar", 2008, C-print with pencil in resin, 27½" x 27½". Alan Klotz.



Eugene Brodsky, *Study for Lace*, 2011, ink on silk, 74½" x 57½". Sears-Peyton.

work from the outside in, or vice versa. The large image *Study for Lace* (2011), printed on silk, with paper collaged onto it, was in many ways the most intriguing work, since it allowed viewers to interact with actual textures and not just the "impressions" of textures.

Often, Brodsky covers his works with Plexiglas, or prints the actual image on the underside, creating a kind of *hinterglas* (or behind glass) effect, one traditionally practiced in German folk art and later taken up by modern artists like Marsden Hartley. This is particularly effective for Brodsky in his smaller pieces, lending informal gestures an air of gravity or drama. A wall of such works featured freehand anatomical imagery, such as lungs or a heart, blueprints or drawings with automotive themes (*Car Sideways*, 2011), a hydrangea, and even cartoony gestures. Often the artist paints the clamps that hold the Plexiglas to the wall the same color as the background of the work itself.

There is a personal stream of consciousness to Brodsky's subject matter and manner that contrasted nicely with the technical tasks he set up for himself, providing him rich material to mull over.

—Cynthia Nadelman

## UP NOW

## Andy Warhol

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and National Gallery of Art Washington, D.C. Through January 15

Someday, perhaps, we'll tire of Andy Warhol. We'll know all we want to know and we will have seen all we want to see. Not yet. In fact, these two strong, provocative shows on the National Mall suggest that the trove of Warhol art and ephemera may be functionally inexhaustible. Not only is there plenty of it, but it can be refitted, rearranged, recontextualized, and reconsidered, like the notes of a major scale, to produce endless variety.

The Hirshhorn's "Andy Warhol: Shadows" is, at this late date, a first. Executed in 1978 and 1979, *Shadows* is a single work composed of 102 large unframed vertical canvases. The entire group has never been exhibited together before. (72 panels had been on long-term view at Dia:Beacon; Dia Art Foundation owns the work and organized this show). The paintings are based on photographs of shadows taken in Warhol's studio, possibly by an assistant. The images were then silk-screened over sponge-mopped layers of monochrome acrylic. Except for differences in color, from somber blues and blacks to hot pinks and a bright aqua, there is little significant variation among the panels.

The power of the Hirshhorn installation is not simply based on the fact that the museum's exhibition space offers

the 450 uninterrupted linear feet required to install the cycle edge-to-edge. The gallery's curved walls also create a uniquely cinematic take on the work. As one proceeds along the vast length, canvases are revealed sequentially, producing the giddy sensation that the work is slipping past as the viewer walks in place. It's an unmatchable viewing experience, one unlikely ever to be had again. That said, there is one installation blunder. From an adjacent gallery, a Dan Flavin fluorescent sculpture casts a subtle but transformative glow on the last

hard Warhol worked to make art look easy.

Take the familiar *A Boy for Meg*, from 1962, a clumsily painted depiction of a *New York Post* front page. That such casual execution should result in an enduringly interesting painting dispenses with any lingering belief we might have that good art must be ostentatiously difficult to make. And yet, this exhibition reveals—with Warhol's obsessively hand-drawn front pages going back to 1956—the diligence, persistence, and concentration behind *A Boy for Meg*'s



Andy Warhol, *Shadows*, 1978-79, acrylic paint on canvas (102 panels), nearly 450 linear feet, installation view.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

few panels. It looks good on them, but it's the opposite of what Warhol wanted. Instead of a deadpan non-ending, we get a luminescent climax.

"Warhol: Headlines," at the National Gallery of Art (up through January 2), makes both more and less of Warhol's newspaper paintings than they require. On view are some 80 works—including paintings, prints, photographs, drawings, and sculptures, as well as film and video—that take sensational (and distinctly apolitical) front-page news as their points of departure. The show's major revelation is just how long and

conception. Also of particular interest is an excellent selection of Warhol's high-contrast black-and-white photographs of newspapers and newspaper vending boxes from the 1980s.

Ultimately, though, the show may take its "headlines" premise too literally. Lots of space is given over to unexceptional collaborations with Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat because these works include above-the-fold banner headlines, while Warhol's most important news-related paintings—the car accidents, electric chairs, and suicides—are omitted because they don't. —Rex Weil

UP NOW

## Richard Diebenkorn

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

Fort Worth

Through January 15

After moving to Santa Monica in 1967, Richard Diebenkorn began working on a series of paintings titled "Ocean Park." Washy and layered, with loosely transparent slips of paint anchored by a scaffolding of distinct geometric shapes, these mostly monumentally sized canvases are perhaps the best-known and most lauded works by the artist, who died in 1993. This handsome exhibition—coorganized with the Orange County Museum of Art and curated by Sarah C. Bancroft—offers a rare chance to see a significant selection from the series, alongside related paintings, drawings, and prints.

Caught between topographical landscapes and flat modernist abstractions, these elegant paintings, which were produced over a period of approximately two decades, are imbued with a searching attitude. Therein lies the secret of Diebenkorn's success—for all their sophistication, his best works have a wobbly uncertainty that suggests an artist never fully at ease with his own results. Palimpsests of thinly applied colors give the canvases a sense of constant flux and perpetual unfinish. *Ocean Park #87* (1975), for instance, is painted with a beautiful and gauzy range of pale yellows, pinks, greens, and blues, its angular structure full of stuttering pentimenti.

One standard reading of Diebenkorn's art is that it commingles Mondrian's rigid lines and squares with Matisse's brushy images of interiors. While "Ocean Park" certainly owes a debt to the works of these two artists, Cézanne's idiosyncratic depiction of pictorial space seems equally germane. In *Ocean Park #116* (1979), Diebenkorn renders simultaneous and competing notions of space. His rich, transparent layers of color and syncopated shapes highlight the flatness of the picture plane, yet there are subtle hints of



Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park #79*, 1975, oil on canvas, 93" x 81". Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

architectural form and pictorial depth, such as cast shadows or receding geometric planes.

Even in his smaller works on paper, which include unusual variations on related themes, the artist was clearly dedicated to investigating equivocal states within his art. Diebenkorn's unease with fixed and predictable answers is, in part, what keeps his paintings relevant two generations later. —Matthew Bourbon

UP NOW

## 'Now Dig This!'

Hammer Museum

Los Angeles

Through January 8

This long overdue exhibition, subtitled "Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980," was worth the wait. Organized for "Pacific Standard Time," a Getty-sponsored celebration of the birth of L.A.'s art scene, the Hammer's show of 140 works by 35 artists leaves no doubt that African Americans have made an essential contribution to Southern California's cultural coming of age.

Two powerful works—Charles White's *Birmingham Totem* (1964), a monumental

drawing of a black boy squatting on a pile of rubble, inspired by a Ku Klux Klan bombing of a church, and Melvin Edwards's *The Lifted X* (1965), a welded-steel tribute to Malcolm X that dredges up fears of torture and incarceration—provide an arresting introduction to the esthetically varied display.

Guest curator Kellie Jones, an art historian at Columbia University, takes a thematic, roughly chronological approach, beginning with "Frontrunners." The pioneers in this section include relatively well-known artists Edwards, White, William Pajaud, and assemblagist Betye Saar. Samella Lewis, an amazingly versatile but sometimes overlooked artist, educator, art historian, writer, and gallerist, is represented by masterful linocut and wood-block prints.

The next section, "Assembling," packs the strongest punch. In wall pieces and sculptures responding to the 1965 Watts Rebellion and its aftermath, John Outterbridge, Noah Purifoy, and others made brilliant use of found materials, conveying a regenerative spirit as well as political purpose. Outterbridge's mixed-media panel *No Time for Jivin'* (1969) and three wrenching figurative sculptures affirm the enduring vitality of his work.

A thematic segment called "Los Angeles Snapshot/Friends" makes the point that featured artists were part of a multi-ethnic network, while "Artists/Gallerists" focuses on those who opened spaces to serve neglected peers. Finally, "Post/Minimalism and Performance," which includes strong works by David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, and Fred



Installation view of "Now Dig This!" Melvin Edwards, *The Lifted X*, 1965, steel, 65" x 45" x 22"; Charles White, *Birmingham Totem*, 1964, ink and charcoal on paper, 7 1/8" x 40 1/8". Hammer Museum.

Eversley, dispenses with "black art" stereotypes.

"Now Dig This!" records an important chapter of art history; one can only hope it isn't the last word.

—Suzanne Muchnic

## Gordon Cook

**George Krevsky**  
**San Francisco**

San Franciscan Gordon Cook (1927–1985) made a name for himself as a printmaker in the 1950s and '60s, producing staggeringly detailed still-life and landscape etchings. The artist's late work, including the sculptures and related paintings, prints, and drawings shown in this exhibition, orbits an opposite pole of radical depictive simplicity.

Cook migrated from one esthetic extreme to the other by way of paintings and drawings of simple, often solitary objects: hats or hat forms, boxes, pieces of fruit. As he grew fonder of these images' subdued surrealism, he began to construct his own subject matter—paper hats, an Amish doll, and the wood sculptures and a few bronzes cast from them that predominated here.

Long before the recent vogue for outsider art, Cook made folksy-looking things such as *Stick Figure—Singer* (1985), a block-headed figure with a Pinocchio nose, a painted matchboxlike torso, and limbs of twigs. He wrung extraordinary expressiveness from subtle adjustments: the tilt of the figure's eyeless head, the spread of its arms, and its slight step forward, a detail with a faint comic echo of Western sculpture's pre-classical Greek origin.

Cook appeared to probe for a zero degree of expressive definition in such works, and in his treatment of them as portrait subjects in painting and graphic media. The inescapability of expression and interpretation appeared to fascinate him. Artists associated with Bay Area Figuration, such as Elmer Bischoff and Joan Brown—to whom Cook was married in the 1970s—were still alive and producing during Cook's late career,



**Gordon Cook, *Stick Figure—Singer*, 1985,**  
**wood construction, 20" x 16" x 4". George Krevsky.**

providing a context in which his late work's oddity stood out through no special effort on his part. —Kenneth Baker

## UP NOW

### Richard Misrach

**Berkeley Art Museum**  
**Berkeley, California**  
**Through February 5**

In October of 1991, on a clear, windy day, parts of the Oakland and Berkeley, California, hills were consumed by a fire that destroyed nearly 3,000 homes and killed 25 people. In the weeks following the disaster, Bay Area-based photographer Richard Misrach used an 8-by-10-inch view camera to record what was left of the mostly affluent neighborhoods. Two decades after the fire, 40 of these images—some enlarged up to 8 by 10 feet—are being

shown for the first time, in this moving exhibition, with an identical presentation on view at the Oakland Museum of California through February 12.

Full of delicacy and restraint, and with a sober palette dominated by smoky grays and browns, the photos suggest a nightmare version of suburbia. In one image, green metal patio furniture appears ready for ghosts, surrounded by charred trees and collapsed cement. In others, lone chimneys stand among bare tree trunks. Visible in the photographs are small markers of the lives that took place here, and careful looking is rewarded with tiny stories. A house-shaped mailbox, complete with Spanish tile roof, hints at what the burnt home behind it might have looked like; a statue of Buddha sits serenely on the midair hearth of a fireplace. In one of the most startling works, a child's tricycle has partially melted—the ribbons of white, yellow, orange, and blue plastic bring to mind Dalí and late de Kooning.

The heartbreaking but esthetically beautiful consequences of destructive forces have been a recurring theme in Misrach's work. "Bravo 20," his late 1980s series, recorded the impact of military target practice on the Western landscape in lush, warm color. More recently, he photographed spray-painted messages left on buildings damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Through tone and detail, Misrach here describes another distinct and telling moment of American experience through landscape.

—Rebecca Robertson



**Richard Misrach, *Untitled (OF 98-91: Mailbox, Alpine Terrace)*, 1991,**  
**archival pigment print, 62" x 77". Berkeley Art Museum.**

## John Santoro

**McCormick**

**Chicago**

The 18 oil paintings in this playful yet moody exhibition by Chicago-based John Santoro, titled "Painter's Forms," are focused on varied landscapes and objects. Familial and domestic themes, as well as the artist's masterly painting technique—long informed by Abstract Expressionism—linked the works together into a coherent presentation.

*Path to the Pool #1* (2011) and *Beach House* (2011) are takes on classic family-vacation settings, though not a soul is in sight. In these scenes, Santoro spikes the fierce strokes of his blue-green palette with splashes of oranges and yellows. A turquoise-blue skyscape, titled *Happy Cloud* (2010), is punctuated with jaunty white marks that seem to wink and grin at the viewer.

In *Father and Son* (2010), a small incandescent lightbulb sits beside a larger bulb, much like the positioning of parent and offspring in traditional portraiture. The white bulbs, their corresponding V-shaped filaments rendered in grayish greens, shine bright against a highly textured background of dark blues. *Godzilla Sock Puppet* (2011) depicts a nonthreatening green gorillalike face emerging from a background of fierce, dark-toned strokes suggestive of smoke.

For three paintings of chocolate cakes, Santoro shifts his palette from the blues

of water and sky to brown and ochre earth tones. Each cake—a solid form that takes up nearly the entire canvas—sits atop an abstracted base whose criss-crossing pattern resonates with the lattice form of the stilts that prop up the home in *Beach House*.

In execution, the cake paintings, which have thicker brush-strokes, deviate from the other works. Nevertheless, these exuberant desserts—with their suggestion of the domestic—feel complementary. The artist even painted a chocolate cake for his great aunt on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

—Ruth Lopez



**Romare Bearden, *Mecklenburg Evening*, 1981, watercolor, pencil, and paper collage on Masonite, 14" x 18".**

**Jerald Melberg.**

was full of heart and depth, revealing just how inspired Bearden was by "home." Themes of family, landscape, and daily life, as well as the female form, were visited and revisited in the selection of collage paintings and prints, shown on the centennial of the artist's birth.

A majestic woman wearing a turquoise wrap centers *Mecklenburg Evening* (1981), while a seminude figure bathes behind her. In the foreground is a sumptuous still life—flowers, book, bread knife, cup, and bowl of fruit. Such domestic objects fill Bearden's interiors—lamps and chairs stand like silent witnesses to his human narrative. He especially loved brooms, using them as a handy vertical to spike his horizontal lines.

The artist often focused on women, depicting them tending children or their gardens. And then there was the sensuous side, given free rein here in several nudes. Languid and lovely, a woman on her stomach stretches across the bottom half of *Mecklenburg County: The Daybreak Express* (1978). A train trailing a plume of smoke is visible through a window. A curvy cane chair rhymes with and plays off the figure.

Quilting time, night chores, a guitarist fingering his instrument: Bearden's specific but never literal memories of the South became a rich catalyst for his soaring imagination. These works brim with the quiet magic of the everyday.

—Richard Maschal



**John Santoro, *Beach House*, 2011, oil on canvas, 36" x 48".**

**McCormick.**

## Romare Bearden

**Jerald Melberg**

**Charlotte, North Carolina**

Romare Bearden is known for his urban scenes—views of Pittsburgh and New York, where he grew up. But for the last

15 years or so before the artist's death in 1988, something softer and gentler glowed in his work, in scenes from the South, set in Charlotte—where he was born—and the surrounding Mecklenburg County.

This exhibition, subtitled "An Artist Remembers His Birthplace,"

UP NOW

## Michael Dunbar

**Grounds for Sculpture**

**Hamilton, New Jersey**

**Through April 22**

Modesty is a virtue in this tasteful exhibition of small sculptures, titled "Instrumental Transitions," by a man who usually goes big. Michael Dunbar typically makes bungalow-size metal sculptures that resemble giant cogs and wheels, cut apart and reassembled, for outdoor fields and plazas. Monumentalism has its place: large hunks of steel and bronze installed outside can help natural forms, even the trees and rocks, suddenly appear as possible found sculpture. But big is an often overused idiom for sculptors like Dunbar, whose elegant, elephantine Erector Set-like works aim to compete with industrial forms for impressiveness.

Here, the Illinois-based artist shrinks his scale—and expands his impact—with 14 shining bronze and painted-steel sculptures from the "Machinist Studies" series, some no bigger than a toaster. The works are on view in the mezzanine of the sculpture park's Domestic Arts Building. In *Telecaster* (2009), for example, a bronze circle does not complete itself, going just 270 degrees around. Supported by a partial buttress, it all looks

grasp the connections of its latticework. From one view, it appears as a tall rocking horse, stripped down to its skeleton; from another, it is the prow of a sailing ship, naked in slats and trusses.

Dunbar captures a sense of arrested movement and paused mechanization—though his machines are from a quickly fading industrial era, based on metal armature rather than circuitry. In that sense, these sculptures—which recall the slow, stately turning of cogs and wheels—may turn out to be monuments after all.

—Carly Berwick

## Suzanne Williamson & John Capouya

**Morean Arts Center**

**St. Petersburg, Florida**

Like 19th-century explorers, photographer Suzanne Williamson and her husband, writer John Capouya, investigated the ancient mounds left behind by the

Calusa people and other Native American communities in this contemplative exhibition, titled "Shadow and Reflection: Visions of Florida's Sacred Landscapes."

Their collaborative installation centered around moody, soft-focused black-and-white photographs of these sites from nine

Florida counties. Williamson (a former photo editor of *ARTnews*) employed vintage cameras from the 1920s and '50s, some equipped with plastic lenses, which gave her images a dreamlike quality. In



Michael Dunbar, *Telecaster*, 2009, cast and machined bronze, 18" x 16" x 20".  
Grounds for Sculpture.

like the half-finished belly of a tiny mechanized whale or, more ominously, a leftover set piece from *A Clockwork Orange*. The more complicated *Chi Cyclotron* (2010) is best viewed in the round, to



Suzanne Williamson, *Ormond Mound, Volusia County, FL, 2007*, photograph printed on voile fabric panel, 60" x 60".

Morean Arts Center.

the pictures, the mounds—constructed by hand from materials including earth, sand, and shells—occasionally loom darkly against gray skies.

Williamson heightened the mood by printing six of the photographs on brushed aluminum panels that simulate the shimmer of sunshine and illuminate spiky palmetto jungles and sparkling water. They were installed on the gallery walls, a few painted in gray-blue tones, alongside archival digital prints on paper. Views of mounds, gnarled tree trunks, drooping leaves, and vines graced partially transparent voile fabric scrims that hung from the ceiling throughout the space, undulating in the air.

Capouya's poetic writings describe burial and temple mounds, providing context for the images. Short blocks of text were projected directly onto the walls from ceiling-mounted projectors, giving added energy and animation to the words. The texts evoked the quietness and sense of separation these sites offer to present-day visitors.

Williamson's photograph of a mound near Cedar Key, for instance, comes alive in Capouya's related vignette. He describes the huge mound's resemblance to an animal or humanlike monster emerging from the ground, with "protruding roots" suggestive of bugged eyes and live moss as a "pelt." "This thing, male, is probably 4,500 years old," he writes. "Before pottery was made here, it lived."

—Donald Miller

UP NOW

## Leonardo da Vinci

National Gallery

London

Through February 5

"The biggest show ever of Leonardo's rare surviving paintings" is just one of the breathless headlines that hailed an exhibition also described as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. For what? Nine paintings (plus drawings, plus works by others that to some degree relate), brought together in the bank-vault isolation of the National Gallery's lowest basement. Paintings such as the two versions of *Virgin of the Rocks*, from the Louvre (ca. 1483–85) and the National Gallery (ca. 1491–1508) itself, confronting one another for the very first time; paintings displaying the artist's chauffeurlike obsession with polishing the bodywork until it shone. For the Renaissance devotee, this show, subtitled "Painter at the Court of Milan," is indisputably a key event; for anyone else, intrigued by the hype and anxious not to miss out, it is an oddly chilly mix.

Leonardo arrived at the court of Ludovico Sforza in Milan around 1482. There he served as a cultural phenomenon, exercising his genius for embellishment and inquiry. Naturally, at the National Gallery, all eyes turn first to the paintings—portraits, plus Saint Jerome suffering (from the Vatican Museums) and several innovative Madonnas. Much—arguably much too much—is made of the ways in which Leonardo plumped up the poses of

mother and child, going for twisty bodies and faces suffused with unearthly glow. And then there is *Salvator Mundi* (ca. 1499), recently restored and now fairly firmly attributed to the artist: a painting as iconic as the Shroud of Turin and equally sunk into ghostliness. As for the bringing together of the two *Virgin of the*

many lent from the Royal Collection, are easily overlooked, though some of them, notably the faintly dimpled torso of a child, nearly as small as a child's hand, have the true Leonardo magic: that inquisitive attention and exquisite precision. In drawing he could clarify minutiae and harmonize a deluge; in painting he buffed up his effects to such a degree that they either shone or stifled. Or, in the case of *The Last Supper*, fading into the refectory wall of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, sunk into tinted shadow. The latter is represented by a nearly life-size photographic reproduction and by a heavy-handed copy belonging to the Royal Academy of Arts, made around 1520 by Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, in which apostle feet appear and everything but the tablecloth is in disconcertingly full color (both are on view in a small second-floor gallery).

It's not just poor states of preservation and glutinous hype that make the works of Leonardo off-putting. However much they are lauded, rated off the scale of all-time human achievement, ultimately they are tested by being seen direct. At the National Gallery it is a relief to ascend afterward to the upper floors, there to see in their various forms of brilliance the great Titians and Botticellis and van Eycks. Then to look back and think how wonderful, surprisingly so in

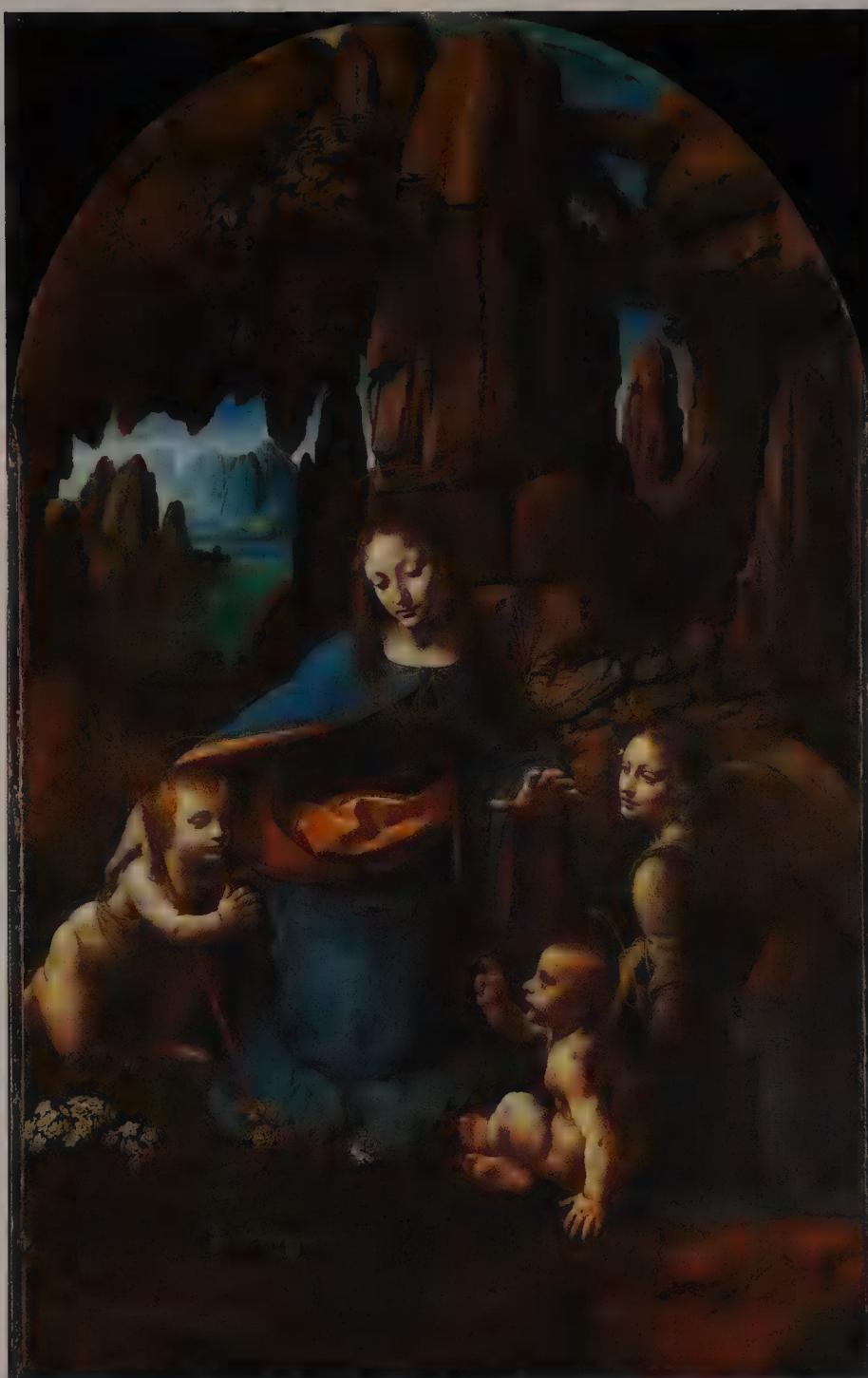
Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, ca. 1491–1508, oil on poplar, thinned and cradled, 74 1/2" x 47 1/2". National Gallery.

*Rocks*, this is rather a flop in that they face each other at such a distance that direct comparison is impossible; and anyway the Louvre's version is so encased with glass and climate controls that, in its uncleaned state, it is difficult to see.

The drawings, on the other hand,

these ballyhoo circumstances, that painting from Krakow, *The Lady with an Ermine* (ca. 1489–90), actually is: the 16-year-old mistress of Ludovico Sforza poised, pert as can be, luminously elegant, holding a stoat, a symbol of purity, tense with animal instinct.

—William Feaver



UP NOW

## Pipilotti Rist

Hayward  
London  
Through January 8

Born Swiss, Elisabeth Charlotte Rist decided to identify with Pippi Longstocking, the dashing children's-book heroine, and made herself known as Pipilotti Rist. In *Ever Is Over All*, a 1997 video installation, she exhibits herself prancing down a street waving a specially adapted red-hot poker bloom with which she smashes car windows. This exercise of careless rapture serves as a preamble to "Eyeball Massage," her London retrospective. From then onward it is telling playfulness all the way.

Essentially, Rist does everything she can think of to get away from the standard projections of video art. She plants tiny screens in shells and handbags; she creates settings on doll's house scale and overwhelms these with life-size projections; she layers perception with gauzy veils and images welling up from little holes in the floor.

And there are trails of naughtiness, à la little Miss Longstocking: knickers arrayed like bunting on a washing line and yet more underwear assembled into a sort of crinoline chandelier.

At several stages, the viewer is invited to lie down and relax on mannequin cushions while all around the artist engages in pastoral frolics involving fruit and flowers, sheep, and a drooling hog. Beguiling, not to say seductive, ultimately these invocations of Never Never Land inspire negative reactions. Here is Pippi as Eve, alternately raptur-



Pipilotti Rist, still from *Ever Is Over All*, 1997, audio/video installation, dimensions variable. Hayward.

ous and sated, weaving her way through meadow and stream to the sound of music reminiscent of Pink Floyd at their most plangent.

—William Feaver

## John Tunnard

Agnew's  
London

A painting typical of John Tunnard involves wide areas of foreshore or desert planted with strange shapes, some biologically derived, others akin to early warning systems. They date mostly from the middle decades of the last century (he died in 1971, aged 71) and they all have rhythm. A jazz drummer in his spare time, from his student days onward, during the Second World War he served as a coast guard. Both occupations affected his paintings.

Pre-war, when she ran her London



John Tunnard, *Morvah*, 1951, gouache on paper, 10½" x 14½". Agnew's.

gallery, Peggy Guggenheim was smitten. "One day," she wrote, "a marvellous man in a highly elaborate tweed coat walked into the gallery. He looked like Groucho Marx." That was in 1938. In this exhibition—titled "Dream Landscapes"—where a good selection of his work was shown, Tunnard's textural elaborations still impressed. He loved to work on board, with heavy gesso to scrape back, incise, and stain, thereby producing weathered effects and extreme distances upon which he superimposed spooky shapes ranging from blobs to apparatus.

When inspiration lagged Tunnard went diffuse, inserting oddities such as inappropriate songbirds and hints of

human form. But at his best he created images that represent a local, Cornish variation on the shop-window look of middle-range Surrealism, Yves Tanguy in particular. In *Messenger*, done in 1969, a satellite dish set against a sky dark with nuclear threat, one may assume, succeeds in summoning up an entire period of snazzy engineering and wild foreboding.

—William Feaver

## Laura Henno

Le Centre Photographique  
d'Île-de-France

Pontault-Combault, France

In this beautiful, disquieting exhibition of 26 photographs, titled "La Route du retour" (The Road Back), the young French artist Laura Henno explored notions of strangeness. Hovering between fiction and reality, her luminous images have a sense of time suspended.

Henno depicts adolescents that seem to be lost, drifting, in a kind of existential state. The works have a cinematic quality—staged, frozen in time, and full of contrasts between light and dark. Most often, the figure is isolated and highlighted, while the landscape remains in the shadows, creating a heightened sense of unreality and giving the spectator the feeling of having intruded upon an intimately private moment.

In *Il deserto rosso* (Red Desert, 2009) a young woman stands alone in a barren landscape, against a fading sunset, seemingly immersed in her thoughts. The photograph shares its title with an Antonioni film, and while the allusion might be unintentional, Henno's image resonates with the spiritual desolation expressed in the film, in which a disaffected Monica Vitti drifts through a dismal industrial landscape.

Some of the works in the exhibition come from a series made on La Réunion, a French island off the coast of Madagascar. The subjects of these photographs—young migrants who often seem to hide themselves in the lush jungle landscape—feel less anonymous and more politicized. While obviously contemporary, these works allude to the island's history of colonization, fugitive slaves, and immigration. In one evocative image, teenage boys huddle together in a forest, though



Laura Henno, *Il deserto rosso*, 2009,  
print on diasec mat, 47 1/4" x 61".  
Le Centre Photographique d'Ile-de-France.

it is unclear whether they are supporting one another or struggling with each other. Such ambiguity gives Henno's work its force.

—Laurie Hurwitz

UP NOW

## Marjetica Potrč

Galerie Nordenhake

Berlin

Through January 21

In her latest architectural case study, Slovenian artist Marjetica Potrč tackles sociopolitical issues surrounding Ramot Polin, a housing project located in Jerusalem that was built during the 1970s. Utopianism, the collective spirit, and the perceived failure of Modernist



Marjetica Potrč, *Ramot Polin Unit with Sukkah*, 2011,  
bricks, wood, wood-wool plates, tar paper, metal, reed, and plastic,  
11' 6" x 13' x 13', installation view. Galerie Nordenhake.

architecture are all investigated in this evocative exhibition, titled "In a New Land."

*Ramot Polin Unit with Sukkah* (2011), a

reconstruction of the dodecahedral unit of the housing project, dominates the gallery. In Potrč's take on the structure, a single unit in black with bright yellow geometric overlays playfully embodies the settlement's hive-like design. Various vernacular details, such as a small AC unit, a steel drum for water, winding electric cables, and mirrored blue windows, ornament the structure's exterior. Attached to the front is a simple wooden sukkah, the ephemeral shelter used during the Jewish festival of Sukkot. These ad hoc additions, which radically transform the shape of the structure, mimic the modifications made to Ramot Polin by its own residents, who have altered the dwellings to meet needs not addressed in Israeli architect Zvi Hecker's original "visionary" design.

On the gallery walls, three series of lively ink-on-paper works (all 2011) offer commentary on related issues. The colorful, cartoonlike drawings that make up "In a New Land" reflect on the struggles of the kibbutz movement in its quest for utopia. "The World of Things," executed in somber black ink, addresses the rise of consumerism, pitting the ideals of nomads, kibbutzniks, citizens, and settlers against each other.

While this exhibition does not represent a new approach for Potrč, the works coalesce into a powerful—and ultimately optimistic—chronicle of a community rising up through the cracks and flourishing. —Alicia Reuter

## Gehard Demetz

Beck & Eggeling  
new quarters  
Düsseldorf

The uncanny wooden sculptures of Gehard Demetz seemed to have stepped into the gallery from some other world. His life-size depictions of stern-faced children are at once familiar and remote, innocent and sinister. Such dichotomies are reflected in the virtuoso Italian artist's technique, as well

The figures are carved not from a single block of limewood but from individual segments that are slotted together in such a way that gaps in the construction are sometimes visible, while their backs remain jaggedly unfinished. The gaps suggest fragility, and some even resemble open wounds.

In this exhibition, titled "Contentore" (Container), the air of paradox was intensified by a contrast in the method of carving employed by the artist: a broadly "chopped" style for hair and clothing and



Gehard Demetz, *It's Warmer Now*, 2011,  
limewood and acrylic paint, 67 1/4" x 15 1/2" x 16 1/2".  
Beck & Eggeling new quarters.

astonishingly smooth, lifelike contours for the children's skin. Demetz acquired his skills among the master craftsmen of the Tyrol, famous for their religious art.

The ominous quality radiated by the figures has been dramatically intensified in Demetz's latest works. A grim-faced boy stands, legs astraddle, holding a black crucifix before him like a machine gun. Another's body has been pierced by an object that resembles a tabernacle, while a girl has a jerrican—a potential bomb—embedded in her torso. These suggestions of violence and violation are chilling enough in themselves; combined with the concentrated but passionless gaze of beautiful children, they are even more unnerving. Furthermore, the blocks from which the artist's figures are carved include plinths that raise the children to eye level with the viewer.

For the first time, the artist has "extrapolated" two of the accessories used here, producing autonomous, exquisitely

detailed sculptures of a tabernacle and a jerrican with Gothic ornamentation. The extraordinarily fine craftsmanship of the Tyrol region is usually expended on kitsch and religiosity. Demetz achieves a formal irony by applying these techniques to charged objects.

—David Galloway

## 'Untitled (12th Istanbul Biennial), 2011'

### Istanbul

Given world events of late, but especially in the Middle East, it was timely that this Istanbul Biennial focused on



Elizabeth Catlett, *Sharecropper*, 1968,  
linocut on paper, 17½" ■ 16¾". 12th Istanbul Biennial.

art and politics, albeit from a deeply emotional, the-personal-is-political point of view appropriate to an exhibition dedicated to the late Cuban American artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957–1996). Called "Untitled," Gonzalez-Torres's usual title for his works, the show was inspired by the artist's minimalist and conceptualist language. Curators Jens Hoffmann and Adriano Pedrosa translated Gonzalez-Torres's themes into a clean, integrated, comprehensible, and often poignant presentation of around 500 works.

Ryue Nishizawa designed the elegant and effective structures for the installation, using corrugated steel partitions to underscore a sense of the temporary and transitional. The biennial was concentrated in two enormous waterfront

warehouses, though there were a number of excellent parallel events scattered throughout Istanbul.

Over 130 artists from around the world were gathered into more than 50 solo presentations and five thematic group shows that specifically referred to works by Gonzalez-Torres. These were "Untitled (Abstraction)," "Untitled (Passport)," "Untitled (History)," "Untitled (Death by Gun)," and "Untitled (Ross)," the last being the name of the artist's lover. They discussed formality, nomadism, cultural identity, politics, the personal, violence, and (gay) love.

While most of the artists were contemporary, there were some from earlier generations. Elizabeth Catlett's prints depicting African Americans, such as

*Sharecropper* (1968), were on view in an engrossing series of rooms that featured women's art from the 1920s to the '70s, one of the biennial's high points. *Drawing with the Camera—Circle in the Square* (1979), a photographic installation by Dóra Maurer, a major, if unknown, Hungarian conceptual artist, was a standout in the abstraction category. Other artists in the exhibition included Eylem Aladogan, Kutluğ Ataman, Mark Bradford, Theo Craveiro, Adrian Esparza, Dani Gal, and Gabriel Sierra.

Although the emphasis on South American and Middle Eastern artists was unsurprising and rewarding, ultimately this was, for once, more an exhibition about esthetic issues than locality and the romance of Istanbul.

—Lilly Wei

## Sophie Bueno-Boutellier

**Freymond-Guth Fine Arts Ltd.**

**Zurich**

Minimalism met up with *Arte Povera* in "Adriatic ... 3h du matin" (Adriatic ... 3 a.m.), an austere yet eloquent exhibition of six works by Sophie Bueno-Boutellier, a French artist who currently lives and works in Berlin. Four wall pieces that fuse painting, sculpture, and installation art had a random feel, but are actually carefully executed manipulations of basic materials: white paint and canvas.



Sophie Bueno-Boutellier, *Gidian Studies*, 2011,  
acrylic on canvas, 65" ■ 29½" ■ 4".

Freymond-Guth Fine Arts Ltd.

To make each of these works, Bueno-Boutellier started out with approximately six-and-a-half yards of canvas, to which she applied an uneven layer of off-white acrylic paint, leaving bare patches that gave the fabric a faded, aged appearance. She then folded the canvas into irregular geometric kite-like shapes to produce a sort of subtly nuanced linear "painting." The soft folds and raw edges of these pieces, some of whose titles refer to poems by the French Surrealist Robert Desnos, create shadows that enhance their three-dimensional, sculptural quality. *Gidian Studies* (2011) was particularly effective, its subdued tonalities at odds with the rugged, paint-stiffened material.

Two additional sculptural works, more site adapted than site specific, combined found objects with elements that looked scavenged but were, in fact, produced by the artist. *Etoile de Mer* (Starfish, 2011) was composed of a weathered plank—crafted out of plaster—that rested on two wooden feet and leaned against a gallery wall, a neatly folded canvas triangle, a coiled root, and a small dowel-shaped object. These components were positioned with studied precision, off center, against a white wall panel framed in natural light.

Equal parts rough and refined, Bueno-Boutellier's work felt well suited to this gallery, located in a former garage, which still carries vestiges of its utilitarian past.

—Mary Krienke

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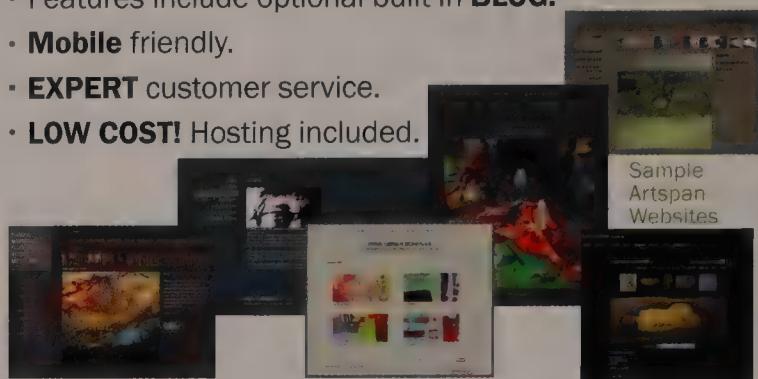
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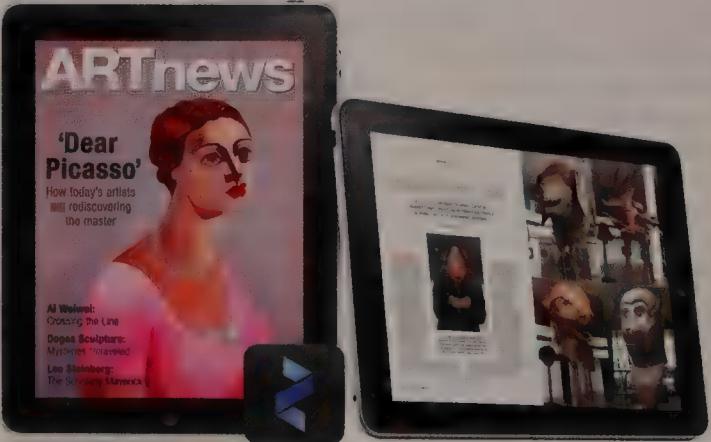
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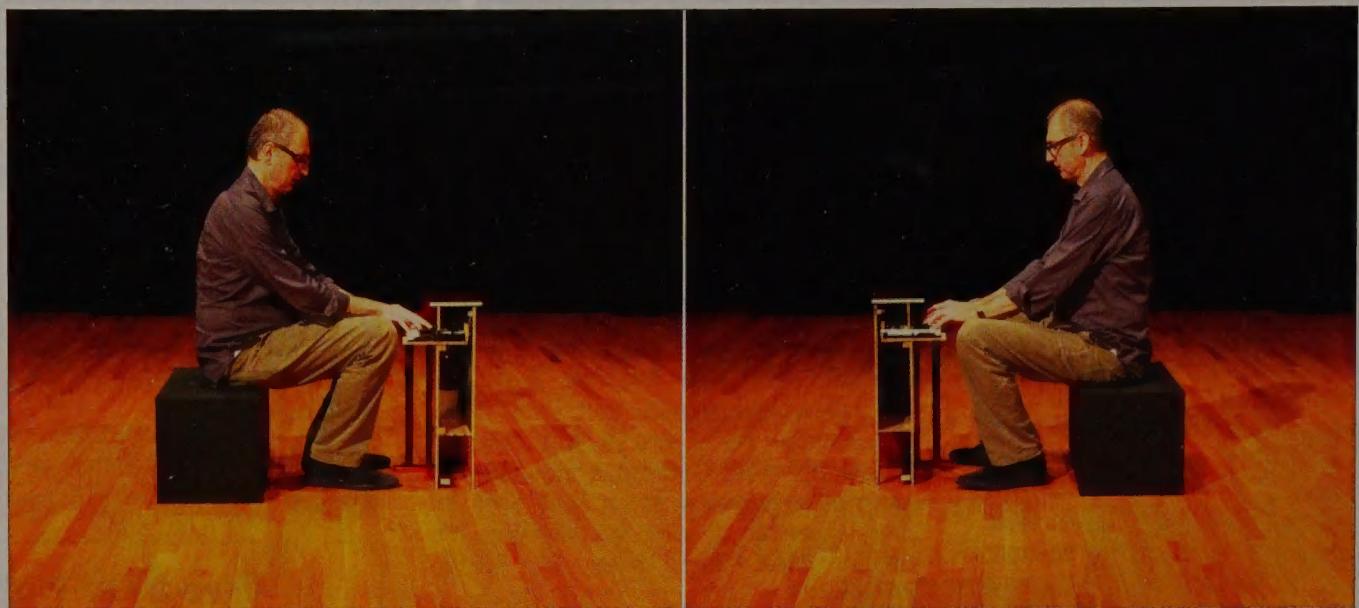
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Still of Jane Benson's dual-channel video *Duet for Split Toy Piano (Playing to Himself)*, 2011.

**O**n first reflection, Jane Benson's musical instruments would seem a departure from her earlier works, which include natural landscapes painted over travel books and postcards, dirt and grass sculpted into miniature mountains to replicate the topography of Manhattan, disco-ball pieces mosaicked onto antique world maps, and plucked swans infinitely reproduced in mirrors. But the artist has always been concerned with dichotomies—urban/rural, pretty/ugly, past/present, Britain/America, appearance/reality—and transformation.

Most recently she has stepped out of the role of lone creator and opened up an international dialogue. Her ambitious project "The Splits," which debuted last winter at the Abrons Arts Center in New York, involves cutting string instruments in half lengthwise and getting musicians to perform with them in duets and chamber groups. The works can be played in various contexts—living rooms or concert halls, private or public places, real or electronic spaces.

"The force behind 'The Splits' is just a gentle gesture to encourage discourse and change," Benson says. "The idea came out of frustration with my work. I felt that, as objects in a gallery space, the pieces lacked the opportunity to evolve and become something that could operate outside." What attracted her to "splitting" was that one instrument could become two and create a new dialectic. "It was a bit like Surrealism and Constructivism," she says. "I'd been focused on the duet, but then it turned into octets and decets."

And now she is bisecting pianos. She began with a toy piano, collaborating with Italian composer and pianist Gianni Lenoci. That piece, called *Duet for Split Toy Piano (Playing to Himself)*, 2011, has culminated in a double-channel video showing Lenoci playing each half of the piano and the score on two separate screens. She also plans to tackle a grand piano, with Lenoci writing the music.

Benson was born in Thornbury, England, in 1972 and educated at Edinburgh College of Art in Scotland and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she received her M.F.A. in 1997. She now divides her time between New York and London. Her artwork has been in group exhibitions at institutions like the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, and MoMA PS1 and the Queens Museum of Art in New York.

She has had solo shows at Helen Pitt Gallery in Vancouver, British Columbia, and at such New York venues as Roebling Hall, Black and White Gallery, and Thierry Goldberg Gallery, which represents her work. Her prices range from \$3,000 for prints to \$20,000 for large sculptural installations. The split instruments vary in price from \$3,000 for the toy piano to \$3,500 for a violin and \$8,000 for a double bass.

Currently in the works are geographical duets called "The Splits: Compass Rose." There's *Baghdad/New York* (a split concert between Iraqi instrumentalists and Benson's chamber group), *Mexico City/New York*, and *Jerusalem/Bethlehem*. For the performances, "the musicians will play to live feeds of each other" over Skype, Benson says. "It will be a conversation in strings."

—Barbara A. MacAdam



Jane Benson.

Barbara A. MacAdam is deputy editor of ARTnews.

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